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THE
LOST LAND OF KING ARTHUR



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle]

KING ARTHUR'S CASTLE AND EXECUTION ROCK,
TINTAGEL

[Frontispiece

THE LOST LAND OF KING ARTHUR

BY

J. CUMING WALTERS

“On the one hand we have the man Arthur, . . . on the other is a greater Arthur, a more colossal figure, of which we have, so to speak, but a torso, rescued from the wreck of the Celtic Pantheon.”—PROFESSOR RHYS.

“There is truth enough to make him famous besides that which is fabulous.”—BACON.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

CHAPMAN AND HALL, LTD.

1909

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BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK

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FOREWORD

WITHIN a small area in the West Country may be found the principal places mentioned in the written chronicles of King Arthur—places with strange long histories and of natural charm. In these pages an impressionist view is given of the region once called Cameliard and Lyonesse. We have ventured into by-ways seldom entered, and we trust to have gathered a few details which may not be wholly without interest in their place. Facts are meagre about King Arthur, and romance has so overlaid reality that his realm seems now to be veritably a part of fairy-land. In this respect the journey is profitless, save that, by taking Malory as a guide, we are led to a few delightful and half-forgotten localities out of the ordinary route, from which romance has not been wholly dislodged and where tradition survives and is strong.

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THE LOST LAND OF KING ARTHUR

CHAPTER I

OF THE KING AND HIS CHRONICLERS

“What an enormous camera-obscura magnifier is Tradition! How á thing grows in the human Memory, in the human Imagination, when love, worship, and all that lies in the human Heart, are there to encourage it!”—*Carlyle*.

No pretence can be made that a complete or exhaustive history of King Arthur is given in this and the following chapters. Only parts of his story and parts of the story of his most illustrious knights are woven into this mosaic of fact and fiction. Sometimes only a few threads of the romance are to be discovered; at other times many are gathered into the fabric.

I have taken those portions only of the Arthurian fable, built upon a small substratum of historic fact, which suited the immediate purpose in view;

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the rest, a huge mass, which it would have been unprofitable to introduce, has perforce been omitted. The primary object has been simply to call attention to the reputed relics of the great hero, to mark some of the floating traditions of his power, and to speak of a few of the localities which bear his name or are associated with his deeds; and I have striven to add a little to the living interest in the mouldering monuments, to brush away a little of the dust of ages from existing evidences, to lift a little the veil of mystery which darkens, disguises, or shrouds the lineaments of the king. As we find him in history, and as he is represented in romance, he is so noble a figure that we should dread to lose him or the conjuring influence of his name. The proud and triumphing Roman reeled for a time under the shock of Arthur's hosts. The Saxon felt his almost invincible power. Christendom hailed his noble order and rejoiced in his imperial sway. Now, where he ruled and made his kingdom, are submerged cities, fallen towers, the wash of waters, the "trackless realm of Lyonesse." The sea has swept over his territory, and the deep shadows of centuries have fallen upon his deeds. His fame has been made imperishable by mighty pens, and many a mountain fastness holds his

name and gives it forth to the world; many a towering rock preserves his story; many a frowning height perpetuates his deeds; many a wild torrent proclaims his name. So by a hundred contrivances does the memory of King Arthur endure, and he looms, a giant, behind the mist of ages. Six hundred localities in the British Isles alone, it has been computed, cherish traditions of King Arthur, and his praise is sung by a multitude of voices, and in every region where Celtic influence has been felt. Such an influence as this cannot proceed wholly from the dry bones of fiction, or from the golden toys of romance. Legends gather about a great name, just as ivy covers the ruined column of old time; but the underlying base is there. Those who contend that King Arthur never lived are open to the charge of allowing the leaves of fable to hide from their eyes the ruined but giant pillar beneath.

In the early unwritten history of this island the invading Brythonic race mastered the inhabitants, the Goidels or Gauls, who had amalgamated with the Neolithic race, and gave the country the name of Britannia. To them is attributed the building of Stonehenge and the round barrows in which the dead were interred. The Cambrians, the

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Welsh, and the people of Brittany are their linguistic descendants. So hardy, stalwart, and venturesome were the Brythons that they gradually spread themselves over the greater part of the country and penetrated far to the north. They offered determined defiance to the Romans three centuries before the Christian era, and successively resisted Norsemen and Saxons until five centuries of the Christian era had passed. Driven first to the west, they took up their abode in the wilds of Wales, and in Cornwall and Devon, and only succumbed at last to the exterminating campaign of the Saxons, who first cut off the Britons of the north and the south, and then defeated the two divisions of the race, first at Chester and then at Bath. The crucial battle between Briton and Saxon was under the leadership of the last of the British chiefs, the Arthur of history and romance, and Cerdic the victorious leader of the "Pagans." Cerdic, sailing across the channel in his *chiules*, or long ships, had landed at the Isle of Wight, fought King Natanleod of Hampshire, with whom he maintained a five years' campaign, and, triumphant at last, and reinforced by the followers of his son and his nephews, had established the West Seaxe, or Wessex Kingdom.

But, if defeated by the British at Mount Badon,

the Saxons were not long in reversing the issue, and Cerdic's son Cymric, and his nephews Stuffa and Whitgar, lived to see their rivals well-nigh exterminated. At Wodensbury in Wiltshire the remnants of the British race joined with the Angles in driving the hated Saxon from the sovereignty of Wessex, but this, too, was without permanent result; for Cerdic's next of descent, Cadwalla, restored the supremacy of his house and race.

Cerdic is said to have died in 534, a date of some importance as helping us to fix the true Arthurian era. The history of many of his contemporaries is almost as vague as Arthur's own, but Cerdic stands out as a man of no uncertain history, and he serves the purpose of allowing us to test the probabilities of Arthur's reputed career. That Cerdic's record should be more definite, though extremely brief, is due to the fact that he was a conqueror; that Arthur's record should be less definite, though extremely long, is due to the fact that he was vanquished, and that his story became mixed with the fables of a generation which did not know him. In the one case we have concrete facts duly preserved; in the other we have merely a name which fires the imagination, and a few events which in the course of time are magnified by romance. Allegory is but truth's

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shadow, and the very songs we deem idle, even the loosely-strung nursery rhymes, may have inner significance, as Carlyle has told us; men never believed in songs that were meaningless, and "never risked their soul's life on allegories." Real history and precious lore are bound up in these shrunken shrouds of withered myths, and it is safe to assume that the name that is enshrined in a folk-song is the name of a transcendent hero, a truly great man deemed more than human, merged into the preternatural, the ideal, or the divine. And, like the student at the Wayside Inn of Sudbury Town, we can—

" Love the twilight that surrounds
The border-land of old romance,
* * * * *
Where mighty warriors sweep along,
Magnified by the purple mist,
The dust of centuries and of song."

Here it is that—

" The chronicles of Charlemagne,
Of Merlin and the Mort d'Arthure
Mingle together."

But how the romance of King Arthur originated, how it came to be written, how it was developed and elaborated, how from a simple history it came to be invested with special signifi-

cance and to be impregnated with spiritual meanings—to explain this, it is necessary in some measure to trace the course of early English literature and to mark the advance of the English race. The story leads us back to dim times and small beginnings. It recalls the semi-barbarism of the first centuries, the fierce conflicts of contending tribes, the domination of Rome, the last supreme encounters between Briton and Saxon, and the making of that race which we believe inherits the hardy and heroic qualities of both. No doubt the substratum of fact is overlaid with superstitions, and fantasy has reared her airy edifices upon the frailest of history's foundations. The narrow track leading backward to the times of Arthur is often undefined and irretraceable, and the traveller finds that unstable bridges have been cast across the gulfs which have broken up the way. Very seldom, therefore, can a strong foothold be obtained, and one is often disposed to abandon the pursuit of truth as hopeless. The tendency has ever been to strain facts to uncertain conclusions in order to fit the exigencies of romance.

As discoverable error ever leads to general doubt, there are not lacking those who deny that King Arthur ever existed. He is declared to be

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a myth, a type, a symbol, an allegorical figure. Even Caxton, in printing Malory's history, was obliged to confute the sceptics by the mention of what he deemed unassailable facts. It was "most execrable infidelity," said he, to doubt the existence of Joshua, David, Judas Maccabæus, or Alexander; all the world knew there was a Julius Cæsar and a Hector; "and," he demanded to know with just indignation, "shall the Jewes and the heathen be honoured in the memory and magnificent prowess of their worthies? Shall the French and German nations glorifie their triumphs with their Godfrey and Charles [Charlemagne], and shall we of this island be so possesst with incredulities, diffidence, stupiditie, and ingratitude, to deny, make doubt, or expresse in speech and history, the immortal name and fame of our victorious Arthur? All the honour we can doe him is to honour ourselves in remembrance of him."

Having thus made it a point of national pride and honour with us to accept and believe in King Arthur, Caxton proceeded to advance the proofs of his existence, which were that his life was written in "many noble volumes," while his "sepulture" might be seen at Glastyngburye [Glastonbury], that the print of his seal was pre-

served in Westminster Abbey, and that "in the castel of Dover ye may see Gawayn's skulle and Cradok's mantel; at Wynchester, the rounde table; in other places, Lancelotte's sworde, and many other thynges." These irrefutable facts admitted, to his thinking, of but one conclusion. "All these thynges consydered, there can no man reasonably gaynsaye but there was a King of thys lande named Arthur." The quaint prologue to Malory's romance abundantly testifies that serious arguments must have been already advanced against Arthur's existence in order to call for so spirited a rebuke and so complete an answer. But, as a matter of fact, the truth of the histories referring to his exploits had been challenged from the first, and in spite of the immense popularity they enjoyed and the influence they possessed, they seem never to have been implicitly and unanimously accepted as veracious records.

Three Welsh poets are supposed to have been the first to celebrate the deeds of Arthur—the full-throated Taliesin, Aneurin, and Llywarch Hên. The two latter bards commemorated the heroes who fell at the battle of Catteraeth, in the year 603. Aneurin's poem, "Gododin," about a thousand lines in length, is preserved in a manu-

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script of the thirteenth century. The writer, who was present at the battle he describes, is supposed by some to have been Gildas, the first historian; others say he was the son of Gildas.* The poem is of a most obscure character, and doubt has actually arisen as to the particular battle to which it refers, a theory having been advanced that it celebrated a disaster which befell the Britons at Stonehenge in 472. But Cattræth is supposed to have been Degstan, or Dawstane, in Liddlesdale, at which the Saxons were defeated; and when such divergencies as these are possible in regard to locality, persons, and dates, the value of Aneurin's poem as history may easily be estimated. The principal fact which Aneurin tells us is that of "three warriors and threescore and three hundred, wearing the golden torques," only four escaped "from the conflict of gashing weapons," one being himself. Another of those

* Aneurin was born about the year 500, and as "a monarch of bards" was of much repute in Manan Gododin, a part of Cymric Scotland. The Welsh Britons included all the Lowlands in their territory, and, as is well known, the names familiar in Arthurian romance can be traced to Scotland, the West of England, and France alike, as will afterwards be shown in these pages. Aneurin's nationality, however, is particularly well worth recalling in view of the theory that Arthur was Scotch.

who escaped from Cattræth was Kynon, known as "the dauntless," whose love for the daughter of Urien supplied the bards with a theme. Urien himself fell in this great battle, and it was the poet Llywarch Hên (buried, it is said, in the Church of Llanever, near Bala Lake) who wrote his elegy. Llywarch Hên passed his younger days at King Arthur's Court as a free guest and a counselling warrior. His career is well summarised by George Borrow in *Wild Wales*, Chapter LXXIII.

Of the third and most important prophet and bard, Taliesin, Prince of Song, we are told that he was the son of Saint Henwg; that he had a miraculous birth; that he spake in wonderful verse at his nativity and sang riddling tales; that he was invited by King Arthur to his Court at Caerleon; and that, having presided over the Round Table as a "golden-tongued knight," he became chief of the Bards of the West. A cairn near Aberystwyth marks the site of his grave. The story of the bard of the radiant brow, of his wonderful delivery from pirates, and of his poems, which excelled those of all others, has always been a popular one, but the sifting of truth from fiction is no easy task. His allusions to Arthur probably have no superior value to the

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references of Aneurin and Llywarch Hên, and we are forced therefore to dismiss them from account. Sir Walter Scott, in the introduction to one of his poetic romances, justly reminded his readers that the Bards, or Scalds, were the first historians of all nations, and that their intention was to relate events they had witnessed or traditions that had reached them. "But," he added, "as the poetical historian improves in the art of conveying information, the authenticity of his narrative invariably declines. He is tempted to dilate and dwell upon events that are interesting to his imagination, and, conscious how indifferent his audience is to the naked truth of his poem, his history gradually becomes a romance." Such were the early historians, as well as bards, upon whose records the English chroniclers relied.

These chroniclers were Gildas and Nennius, of whom no very certain biographical facts can be discovered, though the latter is said to have been a monk at Bangor. Gildas is the reputed author of a treatise, *De Excidio Britanniae*, blindly copied by Bede, which supplied a history of Britain from the time of the Incarnation to the year 560 A.D. But darkness enshrouds the historian, of whose country, parentage, and period much is surmised and little is discoverable. The

crudite author of *Culture in Early Scotland*, Dr. Mackinnon, believes that the writer of the gloomy and pessimistic work on the destruction of Britain was a Romanised Briton, who migrated to Brittany to escape the pitiless severity of the Saxons, and there founded the monastery of Ruys. It has even been claimed that Gildas was a native of Clydesdale, and if this were so another link would exist to connect Arthur himself with Scotland, for the historian was so closely identified with the race and the cause championed by that king that his surname was taken from Arthur's famous battle of Badon, which, again, is said by some to have been fought in the Lowlands.* Gildas was the wisest of the Britons according to Alcuin, and Dr. Mackinnon thinks that his chronicle should be accepted as authentic, in spite of its occasional errors and its undoubted bias. The stern character of the writer is evinced by his denunciations not only of Saxon excesses, but of the clerical vices of his age. In short, Gildas was a religious devotee, an austere and uncompromising critic of the demoralising customs of the time; a species of prophet, also, who saw in corruption and degeneration the signs of coming

* A Badon in Linlithgowshire is the reputed site.

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destruction for the race to which he belonged. Roman influence had undermined the morals of the people and enervated public and social life. The story Gildas tells is one of unrelieved gloom, but it stands out in contrast to other narratives by its rugged simplicity and its freedom from the more romantic elements. Murder, sacrilege, and immorality were bringing about wholesale desolation, and the patriotic Gildas saw no future before his country but absolute ruin and racial extinction. His allusions to Arthur are scanty, incidental, and none too complimentary, and they have assumed importance only as bases for the construction of bold theories by subsequent writers.

In Somerset, near the ancient British settlement of Brean, is a rocky islet known as Steep Holm, 400 feet high and about a mile and a half in circumference. In this desolate place it is said that Gildas Badonicus took refuge during the time of conflict between Britons and Saxons, and that here he composed the greater part of *De Excidio Britanniae*. Leland records that the hermit "preached every Sunday in a church by the seashore, which stands in the country of Pebidiane, in the time of King Trifunus; an innumerable multitude hearing him. He always wished to be a faithful subject to King Arthur. His brothers,

however, rebelled against that king, unwilling to endure a master. Hueil (Howel), the eldest, was a perpetual warrior and most famous soldier, who obeyed no king, not even Arthur himself." Steep Holm was invaded by pirates, and Gildas was compelled to seek another asylum. He chose Glastonbury, and there he died. His attitude was pessimistic in the extreme. "The poor remnant of our nation," he said, "being strengthened that they might not be brought to utter destruction, took arms under Ambrosius, a modest man, who, of all the Roman nation, was then alone in the confusion of this troubled period by chance left alive. His parents, who, for their merit, were adorned with the purple, had been slain in the same broils, and now his progeny, in these our days, although shamefully degenerated from the worthiness of their ancestors, provoked to battle their conquerors, and, by the goodness of God, obtained the victory." In this dismal strain did he write of triumphs, and the power with which he described defeat may therefore easily be guessed.

The answer that has been given to the question, oft repeated: Why is history so silent on King Arthur? is a strange one. It is said that Gildas, on hearing that Arthur had slain his brother

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Howel, was so deeply offended that he determined that the hero should not be celebrated by him. In revenge, he cast into the sea "many excellent books which he had written concerning the acts of Arthur, and in the praise of his nation, by reason of which thing you can find nothing of so great a prince expressed in authentic writings." Gildas himself supplies another explanation, for he bewailed the loss of national records "which have been consumed in the fires of the enemy, or have accompanied my exiled countrymen into distant lands." His own sources of information were those which he found in Armorica and other portions of the Continent.

Nennius is supposed to have compiled another comprehensive history comparable with that of Gildas — *Historia Britonum* — the period embraced being from the days of Brute the Trojan to the year 680 A.D. But so much doubt prevails as to his work, that the history, despite the later date, has been ascribed to Gildas himself. Both may have been forgeries of the tenth or eleventh century. For five or six centuries the story of Arthur was "folk-lore," and was preserved in snatches of song, a few fragments of which still exist. Such a legend, as Longfellow says, can only—

“ Spring at first

Out of the hunger and the thirst
In all men for the marvellous.
And thus it filled and satisfied
The imagination of mankind,
And this ideal to the mind
Was truer than historic fact.”

Songs in praise of heroes, real or mythical, always exist among rude peoples—the sagas which nations unwillingly let die. They are the repository of national history, the inspiration of an aspiring and progressive race, the embodiment of its hopes, the treasury of its traditions. Mythology, “the dark shadow which language throws on thought,” is the first outcome of mental activity and percipience—the struggle for human expression of all that is marvellous and memorable. All the early history of races is mixed and engloomed with dim allegories. Intense reverence for divinities, or the awe of them, leads to the making of fables and the reciting of marvels, in which the gods speak and act as men, or men speak and act as gods. The thoughts of primitive peoples are concentrated upon the hero, the commanding figure who typifies their desires, and about whose name cluster legends of victory. Not infrequently, divine qualities are attributed to that hero who thus looms majestically upon the

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horizon of history, and ultimately becomes a religion. "The gods of fable are the shining moments of great men," Emerson said, and whether the Arthurs and Odins of mythology were men worshipped as deities, or deities divested of divinity and transformed into historic heroes, the after-ages must always have some difficulty in deciding. What we know is that the interval between language and literature is crowded with shadowy mythological lore, and little of the light flashed back from to-day can illumine the haunted, mystic, twilight time of phantom and superstition.

Yet Geoffrey, Archdeacon of Monmouth, and afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph (1100-1154), in giving shape and substance to the Arthurian legends and traditions, had no better material to work with than that supplied by the British folk-songs, the tainted records of Gildas and Nennius, and the so-called Armoric collections of Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, who flourished in the eleventh century, and connected the Arthur of Brittany with the Arthur of Siluria. Geoffrey's famous *Chronicon sive Historia Britonum*, dedicated to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and given to the world in the Latin tongue in the year 1115, was professedly a translation of the *Brut y Bren-*

hined, a "history of the Kings of Britain, found in Brittany," best described in Wordsworth's phrase: "A British record long concealed in old Armorica, whose secret springs no Gothic conqueror e'er drank."

In reality his imagination had been fired by the bardic celebrations of Arthur's triumphs, the songs still sung vauntingly by an unconquered race. The old monkish chronicler manifested a marvellous ingenuity in imparting circumstantiality of the most convincing character to his narrative. He connected place-names of great repute with eponymous heroes; he linked the truths of the Roman occupation with the half-truths or fables of the British resistance; he wove some of the most striking Scriptural facts into the fabric of the romance; he so leavened falsehood with reality that the imposture was hard to detect, especially in an uncritical age, and the effect was most impressive upon the minds of an unreasoning generation. His inventions did not extend to incidents; these he took from the chronicles to hand, and he can only be charged with a free amplification of the records, and a readjustment of the events which had been described. Notwithstanding all the craft and devices of the chronicler, however, his history was almost immediately challenged,

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William of Newburgh, a Yorkshire monk, declaring that Geoffrey had "lied saucily and shamelessly," with many other hard terms. He charged the supposed chronicler with making use of, and wholly depending upon, the old Breton tales, and with adding to these contestable compilations "increase of his own." Nor was William of Newburgh alone in his protests and denunciation. Giraldus Cambriensis, by a parable, implied that Geoffrey's work was a deceit. There was a man at Caerleon, he said, who could always tell a liar because he saw the devil and his imps leaping upon the man's tongue. The Gospel of St. John was given him; he placed it in his bosom; and the evil spirits vanished. Then the *History of the Britons*, by "Geoffrey Arthur" ("Arthur" was a by-name of Geoffrey's), was handed to him, and the imps immediately reappeared in greater numbers, and remained a longer time than usual on his body and on his book. *Cædit quæstio*. But all this did not prevent Geoffrey's masterpiece in nine books from attaining a remarkable popularity both in its original form and when translated, as it rapidly was, into the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman-French languages, where it could be fully understood of the people. It covered the history of the Britons from the time

of Brut, great-grandson of Æneas of Troy, to Cadwallader's death in 688.

The first translators were Geoffrey Gaisnar or Gaimar, in 1154 (the original history had been published only seven years previously), who turned the story into Norman-French verse, and Wace, a native of Jersey, who obtained the favour of the Norman kings, and was the author of two long romances in Norman-French—the famed *Brut*, or *Geste des Bretons*, and the almost equally famous *Roman de Rou*. The former work was a free metrical rendering, published in Henry II.'s reign, of Geoffrey's *Chronicle*, with some new matter. Wace, according to Hallam the historian, was a prolific versifier who has a "claim to indulgence, and even to esteem, as having far excelled his contemporaries without any superior advantages of knowledge." It was in emulation of him that several Norman writers composed metrical histories.

Then came Layamon, a Midland priest living at a noble church at Emly, or Arley, who at the close of the twelfth century produced the first long poem written in the English language. He did not go to Geoffrey of Monmouth's work direct, but wrote an amplified imitation of Wace's version of the *Chronicle*. Layamon's paraphrase

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contained just over double the number of lines in Wace's poem, the additions consisting chiefly of interpolated dramatic speeches. There were already Cymric, Armoric, Saxon, and Norman ingredients in the medley of history and romance, and to these Layamon added a slight Teutonic element, for the chansons of the Trouvères had carried the fame of Arthur into Germany, and already new legends with new meanings were germinating from the loosely-scattered seed. With Artus for the central figure and with courtly chivalry for the theme, these variations and expansions of the story of the British chief exercised as powerful and enduring an influence upon the people of France and Germany as they had done, and continued to do, upon the people of Britain. The good priest seems to have had no other object in writing in good plain Saxon the story of King Arthur than to make widely known among his countrymen the noble deeds in which he evidently had an abounding faith. In fact, his purpose was purely patriotic. The only guile he employed was in supplying the names of many persons and places, in addition to the speeches, all of which circumstances served to magnify the literary imposture. Walter Map, or Mapes, a man of the Welsh Marches, with a reputation for

exceeding frankness and honour, followed Layamon and introduced other and more striking details of permanent value. Map was the friend of Becket, and is believed to have been for some time the king's chaplain. For the love of the king his work was done. His Latin satirical poems display his chief characteristics, and it is as a wit rather than a writer that he was famous at the Court. Yet it was this man who is held to have conceived the character of the pure and stainless knight Sir Galahad, assigning to him what is in some respects the chief, or at all events the worthiest, position in the Arthurian list of knights. If Sir Galahad, stainless, chivalrous, alone capable of achieving the Quest of the Grail, were the creation of Walter Map, to him we owe that spiritual and religious element which refines and enriches King Arthur's history. Map wrote the story of the Grail, a Christianised rendering of Celtic myth, and to him probably we owe the moving and impressive *Mort*, with those notable outbursts which rank among the treasures of our literature. He, however, had the originals to work upon. The Welsh had taken their legends to Brittany, the troubadours were singing them, and the German and the French chroniclers were at work. And though there is no doubt that Map

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contributed in a considerable degree to the romances, it must be faithfully recorded that questions have arisen whether he was really capable of doing all that has been attributed to him, and whether, if he had the capacity, he would also have had the inclination. "Spotless spirituality," such as he is supposed to have infused into the story, is scarcely consistent with the character of the man whose Anacreontics are often lacking in refinement.*

So far, it will be easily conceded, very little has been advanced in the way of proof of the existence of the British prince and hero, of the Cymric "Dux Bellorum," of the Chief of the Siluri or Dumnonii, the name given to the remnant of the British races driven westward by the Saxons. We can understand Milton questioning who Arthur was, and doubting "whether any such reigned in Britain." "It had been doubted heretofore, and may be again with good reason," he wrote, notwithstanding the fascination possessed by—

"What resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son
Begirt with British and Armoric knights."

* Take, for instance, the song in which he expresses the wish to die while drinking in a tavern,—"*Meum est propositum in taberna mori.*"

Geoffrey's "monument of stupendous delusion" had not deceived him, and Sir Thomas Malory's laborious compilation, while winning unstinted admiration for its beauty, richness, and delectation, would be as unconvincing historically as were Caxton's quaintly-argued evidences. All the tributaries which now combined to make the full broad current of Arthurian literature were infected at their sources, numerous and widely separated as those sources were. If Malory depended, as we have the authority of the best scholars for believing, upon the several ancient romances of Merlin, the inventions and adaptations of Walter Map, the mysterious compilations of pseudonymous "Helie de Bouri" and "Luces de Gast," with other manuscripts—some of which are untraced—of like character, it was obvious that he was only presenting us with an aggregation of the impostures, inventions, fables, and falsities of the centuries preceding. That Malory had a conscientious belief in the romance is extremely probable, though in the absence of all information concerning him—for he is a name, a great name, and little more—we can only infer this from the scrupulous manner in which he has performed his task and from the commendatory form in which it was issued in the year 1485.

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Judged purely as literature, and with every allowance made for want of uniformity in level as well as for the tediousness of numberless digressions, Malory's romance only admits of one opinion; and to him and to Caxton (who, despite the humility of his prologues and epilogues, and his professions of "simpleness and ignorance," was a scholar and a master of middle-class English) the race is under a perpetual debt.* The compiler does not seem to be open to the charge levelled against him by Sir Walter Scott, that he "exhausted at hazard, and without much art or combination, from the various French prose folios"; on the contrary it is easy to conceive that he exercised that "painful industry" with which he is credited by the writer of the Preface to the edition of 1634. In addition to this, he stamped his own individuality upon the work, and manifested a singular purity of taste by removing the grosser elements which stained many of the earlier versions, and by preserving all that was best as literature and in keeping with the finest and truest spirit of romance. We know from the scholarly investigations of Dr. Sommer and Sir

* William Caxton, "simple person," as he styled himself, urged that he undertook the work at the request of "divers gentlemen of this realm of England."

Edmund Strachey how judicious Malory was in translating from his "French books," or in making abstracts, or in amending and enlarging. With true insight he chose the material that was of good report and of genuine worth; the dross he cast aside. Malory may have belonged to a Yorkshire family, judging from the fact that Leland recorded that a Malory possessed a lordship in that county, but there is no slight authority for believing that he was a Welshman and a priest—"a servant of Jesu both day and night," as he himself said. That he was a good and earnest Christian his own work proves beyond all question, for he imparted all the religious ardour to the romance that he could, and accentuated that element when it had already been introduced.

The romance of Arthur was enriched, to use Gibbon's words, with the various though incoherent ornaments which were familiar to the experience, the learning, or the fancy of the twelfth century. Every nation enhanced and adorned the popular romance, until "at length the light of science and reason was re-kindled, the talisman was broken, the visionary fabric melted into air, and by a natural though unjust reverse of public opinion the severity of the present age became

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inclined to question the existence of Arthur." That Arthur's name should stream like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain-peak is the fault of the mediæval writers who, in taking the British king for their hero, could represent no age but their own, and had no consciousness of anachronism. It came natural to them in speaking of the sixth-century knights to endow them with the attributes of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and to describe Arthur's Britain much as they would have described the Britain of a Henry or an Edward. The Arthur of Geoffrey, of Walter Map, and of Malory is as impossible as the Arthur of Wagner, Lytton, Swinburne, and Tennyson. Most of the writers on chivalry have either viewed and treated the Knights of the Round Table as contemporary heroes, or have altogether idealised them. We are forced to the conclusion that Geoffrey and all the other mediæval chroniclers had no real conception of the character of the age of which they wrote; if they discovered real names and real persons they transported them to an imaginary world and invested them with fabulous attributes. They made reality itself unreal, transformed heroes into myths, and buried history beneath romance; they had no power to recognise truth even when it appeared to them.

Of the King and his Chroniclers 29

King Arthur was a traditional and historic chieftain of rude times, the man of an epoch, a hero to be sung and remembered. His life must have been a tumult; his seventy odd battles were the events of his era. Whether he represents a nascent civilisation, or whether, following the Romans, he simply maintained a barbaric splendour in the cities they had made or by means of some enlightened laws they had instituted, is a matter of dispute. But he is the "gray king," the elemental hero, not the advanced type. It is a remarkable fact that English scholars have until quite recently done so little to popularise Arthurian literature. Malory's version remained almost inaccessible until Southey issued his edition, and the best work of all was undertaken for us in latter years by Dr. Sommer, a German. Considering the hold on the imagination which the romance possessed, little was done to elucidate the obscurities and to solve the mysteries concerning not only the authors but the heroes themselves and the land to which they belonged. Much has been conjectured, but we feel that we are dealing more with phantoms and fancies than with realities and facts. Yet what an inspiration King Arthur has been! His name has lingered, his memory has been treasured in national ballads. Poets have in

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all ages hovered round the subject, and some have alighted upon it, only perhaps to leave it again as beyond their scope.

“The mightiest chiefs of British song
Scorned not such legends to prolong.”

Milton, Spenser, Dryden, Warton, Collins, Scott and Gray, together with derided and half-forgotten Blackmore; Lytton, with his ambitious epic, doomed to unmerited neglect; Rossetti, James Russell Lowell, and lastly, Arnold, Morris, Swinburne, and Tennyson—these have lifted the romance into the highest and purest realm of poetry, and have impregnated the story with new meanings and illuminated it with rich interpretation.

All have felt the influence of Arthur's history, “its dim enchantments, its fury of helpless battle, its almost feminine tenderness of friendship, its fainting passion, its religious ardours, all at length vanishing in defeat and being found no more.” We have seen how the Arthurian history, real or fabulous, arose from early traditions and grew as each chronicler handled it and combined with it the traditions and the fictions of other races. It lost nothing by its transfusion into new tongues, but was enriched by the imaginations of the adapters and combined with the stories already

current in other lands. The hero that Celtic boastfulness had created became the representative hero of at least three peoples in these early times, and the songs of the Trouvères speedily spread his fame over Western Europe. We find Arthur represented as the master of a vast kingdom, and his power extending to Rome itself; and we find him claimed as the natural hero of nearly every race which heard his praise and was kindled to valour by the example of his exploits. Each country seemed bent upon supplying at least one representative of the Table Round, and eagerly competed for the pre-eminence and perfection of the knight of its choice. The kingdom allotted to him was without limit, and as the elder Disraeli would put it, "fancy bent her iris of many-softened hues over a delightful land of fiction."

Lost though King Arthur's realm is, the land of the ancient British chieftain must have been real, and it is most possible that we tread the dust which covers it in journeying from Caerleon to Glastonbury, from Glastonbury to Camelford, from Camelford to Tintagel. To these places is our pilgrimage directed.

CHAPTER II

OF LYONNESSE AND CAMELIARD

“ In olde dayes of the King Artour,
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this lond fulfilled of faerie.”—*Chaucer*.

“ I betook me among those lofty fables and romances which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence had in renown over all Christendom. . . . Even these books proved to me so many incitements to the love and steadfast observation of virtue.”—*Milton*.

“ Time upon my waste committed hath such theft,
That it of Arthur here scarce memory hath left.”
Drayton.

No matter how far the chroniclers of old departed from fact in the details of their narratives, they grouped the incidents around a central figure, a magnificent ancient hero; and, more than that, they specified the actual locality in which that hero had won his renown. But just as they magnified the hero out of all proportion, so they extended the area of his realm beyond all

possibility : hence the difficulties that meet us in the search for truth.

Of the Celts, Ralph Waldo Emerson has perhaps left us, in brief, the best record. He sums up the greatness and the importance of the race by saying that of their beginning there is no memory, and that their end is likely to be still more remote in the future ; that they had endurance and productiveness and culture and a sublime creed ; that they had a hidden and precarious genius ; and that they "made the best popular literature of the Middle Ages in the songs of Merlin and the tender and delicious anthology of Arthur." This race was not likely to take a narrow view of its possessions, or to assign a small territory to its greatest monarch. Its claim may be preposterous, but that comes of the consciousness of superior strength and of daring imagination. Britain was not large enough for the Celts ; they required not a country but a continent. And when their songs were sung, their stories told, and their great Arthur's name celebrated throughout the west, they boldly affirmed that the west was his, and that he had subdued and ruled the whole civilised world. Arthur's England became in their eyes the perfect realm, the ideal place ; and the survival of

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this idea may be discovered in the works of the poets, old and new.

“ Foemen feet to dust have trod
The blue-robed messengers of God,”

was Llywarch Hên's allusion to the slaughter of bards, evincing his belief in their sacred character. Song was to the Cymry at once education, a vent for national feeling, and a memorial of great events. The bard ranked beside the artisan as one of the pillars of social life. He had only one theme, his country's hope, misfortune, and destiny; and, as M. Thierry has aptly said, the nation, poetical in its turn, extended the bounds of fiction by ascribing fantastic meaning to the words. “The wishes of the bards were received as promises, their expectations as prophecies; even their silence was made expressive. If they sang not of Arthur's death, it was a proof that Arthur yet lived; if the harper undesignedly sounded some melancholy air, the minds of his hearers spontaneously linked with the vague melody the name of a spot, rendered mournfully famous by the loss of a battle with the foreign conqueror. This life of hopes and recollections gave charms, in the eyes of the latter Cambrians, to their country of rocks and

morasses." How much we really owe, then, to historic fact and how much to bardic song the accounting of Camelot and Avalon, Tintagel and Almesbury, as the famous and redoubtable spots of Arthurian accomplishments and occupation, would be difficult to decide. Literary genius from the first centres in the minstrel, who is both composer and singer, who stimulates to action and records events, who is himself "doer" and "seer."

But for this rich and sustained Celtic influence our literature would be poor indeed, would be less romantic, less poetic, and lacking in the vitality of human passions, human hopes and aspirations, human suffering and despair. For the dominant note in Celtic literature—and this particularly applies to the Arthurian legend which, despite its boasts, is a story of failure—is an indefinable melancholy, an exquisite regret; the poetry may be, as Matthew Arnold said, drenched in the dew of natural magic, and the romances may be threaded with radiant lights, but there always remains the underlying sombreness of texture or the overhanging cloud-darkening of the scene. Joyous music concludes in a minor key or is broken by a sudden note of pathos. The Celtic bards sang of war, but though the

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heroes always went forth bravely to battle it has been recorded that they "always fell." Victories are less frequently celebrated than defeats are mourned. The glory of the Celt was vast and transcendent, but from minstrel-times it was a fading glory. Work as the history-weavers might with the golden shuttles of romance their tears mingled with the gleaming strands, and the tissue as it left the loom was a medley of broken lights and shadows. Nevertheless, the pictures they have left us of chivalrous times remain unsurpassed for the grandeur of their conception: they remain the model and despair of all ages.

The description of Arthurian England, the "Logris" of the chroniclers, comports with the suggestions of romance, but ill accords with the facts.* Even if we grant the Round Table and

* It is interesting and somewhat amusing to note the lament of Charles Waterton, author of *Wanderings in South America*, who thought England as a field for knightly adventure had degenerated. "England has long ceased to be the land of adventures," said he. "Indeed, when good King Arthur reappears to claim his crown he will find things strangely altered here. . . . It is certain that when he reigned here all was harmony and joy. The browsing herds passed from vale to vale, the swains sang from the bluebell-teeming groves, and nymphs, with eglantine and roses in their neatly braided hair, went hand in hand to the

the Quest of the Grail, the fact remains that the times were barbarous and that the Britons of the sixth century had only reached the outer borders of civilisation. The exploits of the knights themselves are indicative of a prevailing state of lawlessness verging perilously upon absolute savagery. Appalling rites were practised in the castle strongholds, and the life neither of man nor woman was deemed precious. The romancers themselves do not disguise that the purpose and the methods of the knights were little superior to the purpose and methods of those whom they warred against; and the common practice of the knights to "reward themselves" in their own ways for victories achieved disposes at once of the contention that their motives were unselfish, or that their chivalry was pure and disinterested. The England of King Arthur was therefore by

flowery meads to weave garlands for their lambkins. If by chance some rude uncivil fellow dared to molest them, or attempted to throw thorns in their path, there was sure to be a knight-errant not far off ready to rush forward in their defence. But alas, in these degenerate days it is not so. Shall a harmless cottage-maid wander out of the highway to pluck a primrose or two in the neighbouring field, the haughty owner sternly bids her retire; and if a pitying swain hasten to escort her back, he is perhaps seized by the gaunt house-dog ere he reach her."

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no means like to be the ideal land of peace, beauty, and content which poets have imagined. Neither can we concede the whole claim to Arthur's undisputed possession of the entire kingdom. The freedom with which the chroniclers spoke of the king's unmolested journey north, south, east, and west, only proves that they made an unwarrantable use of names. Among the places loosely mentioned or referred to at random in the romance, or perchance confused in the writers' minds with places within a small area, we must count all those beyond the Severn and Trent, unless we adopt the alternative theory and accept the north as Arthur's realm. To these we add all the large proportion of places, more or less fantastically named, which seem to have had no existence out of the chroniclers' brain. Where shall we look for Carbonek, for the land of Peter-saint, for Joyous Isle, for Waste Lands, for Lonazep, for Goothe, for Case, for the Castles of Grail, La Beale Regard, Pluero, Jagent, and Magouns? to say nothing of a host of others. And are we to be deluded by the familiarity with which Jerusalem, Tuscany, Egypt, Turkey, and Hungary are spoken of, into believing that these distant places were really visited by Arthur and his knights? Even if we were to concede all the

localities mentioned in Malory's work we should be confronted by a new difficulty in the *Mabino-gion*, where quite a fresh series of towns and countries is mentioned in addition to many of the old ones. But while in the *Mabinogion* the west of Europe is almost exclusively dealt with, the English, French, and German historians would be content with nothing less than the best part of the hemisphere. No petty view, however, must be taken of the Arthur-land of romance. If Caerleon was his capital, we must believe that he was not unknown north of the Humber, and that he had a castle in old Carlisle. Calydon and Brittany, Ireland and Wales, acknowledged his power and felt his sway. The Roman himself met Arthur face to face; knights carried his fame to Constantinople—so the early historians asseverate, and so they doubtless sincerely believed.

But the more cautious student will confine his attention to a group of but half-a-dozen places in South Wales, Devonshire, and Cornwall, and will doubt the truth of tradition even when it mingles with the nomenclature of the romance. Of Lyonesse whelmed beneath the waves we have no knowledge; it is a lost and perhaps half fabulous region. Cameliard, whose boundaries are fairly well known, is strewn with doubtful relics,

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and preserves a multitude of strange stories. These are all that remain to us when we have traversed King Arthur's land. Lyonesse is reported to have been a region of extreme fertility, uniting the Scilly Isles with Western Cornwall. The hardy Silures were the inhabitants of this tract, and were remarkable for their industry and piety. No fewer than one hundred and forty churches testified to the latter quality, and the rocks called Seven Stones mark the site of their largest city. Tradition is untrustworthy as to any great cataclysm, but the Saxon chronicle declared that Lyonesse was destroyed by a "high tide" on November 11, 1099. The assumption is that where the sea now sweeps with tremendous force, between Land's End and the Scillies, once lay a fair region, another Atlantis, which formed no unimportant part of King Arthur's realm. The etymology of the name Scilly is more or less doubtful. The word has been identified with Silura, or Siluria, the land of the Silures—that is, South Wales. Malory's Surluse, or Surluce, reminiscent of the French Sorlingues, if it be not Scilly must remain unidentified. The first mention of it is in the history of La Cote Male Taile, where it is said that Sir Lancelot and the damsel Maledisant (afterwards known as Bienpensant)



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle

THE ROCKY VALLEY, TINTAGEL

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“rode forth a great while until they came to the border of the county of Surluse, and there they found a fair village with a strong bridge like a fortress.” A later reference shows that it was in and about Cornwall that the knights were at this time staying and seeking adventures with the king; and the “riding forth a great while to the border of the country of Surluse” would fit in with the idea that Cornwall and Scilly were not then divided by the sea, but formed part of the kingdom of Lyonesse. Sir Tristram, who is essentially a Lyonesse knight, was sought in the country of Surluse when he had vanished during the period of King Mark’s treachery; and there seems no doubt that, though an accessible part of the kingdom, it was a considerable distance away, and perhaps somewhat out of the beaten track. Sir Galahalt, “the haut prince,” was its ruler, and he was resorted to by the knights; but we are distinctly told that “the which country was within the lands of King Arthur,” and for that reason Sir Galahalt could not even arrange a joust without obtaining his sovereign’s consent. Again, Sir Galahalt was known as Sir Galahalt “of the Long Isles,” which admits of a fair deduction, and seems not without its significance in this argument.

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The "guarded Mount," dedicated to St. Michael, overlooks the long Atlantic waves, the waste of waters, and "towards Namancos and Bayona's hold," and this Ultima Thule is thronged with traditions of Arthur and his lost territory. Grim, cavernous Pengwaed, or Land's End, with its granite rocks; the Lizard, and Penzance, the last town in England, are all stored with these old memories; and the waves flooding the bays tell of that younger time over which hangs perpetual shadow. This is the Lyonesse of Tennyson's imagining, the

"Land of old, upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again,"

where long hillocks dip down to the sea-line, where the coast spreads out into shifting treacherous sand, and where amid the dreary plains the Silures fought their battles for life and freedom.* At Vellan, Arthur slaughtered so many Danes that the mill next day was worked with blood. Land's End still shows its "Field of Slaughter," and by the coast Arthur and Mordred met during

* By some Lyonesse is identified with Léonnois in Brittany, but as Mr. Aldis Wright has pointed out, the continuous references in the romance to "riding" from Lyonesse to other parts of Cornwall shows that Lyonesse and Cornwall were on the same land.

the last conflict. Lyonesse may have included Armorica also, still rich with its incomparable traditions and its unsurpassed folk-songs. For once the people of Brittany, Cornwall, and Wales, speaking practically the same tongue, lavished all their poetic wealth upon the Arthurian cycle of legendary history, claimed the knights in common, and each still claims to possess the more famous shrines. Merlin's forest thus becomes a part of Lyonesse; Joyous Gard (as we shall presently see) can still be found in Brittany, instead of Northumberland; and Avalon, instead of being a pilgrim's resort in Somerset, is an island off the Breton coast, seen dimly from the wild moorland country, strewn with dolmens, and reaching down to a shore of silvery sands. Between the orange-coloured rocks "the sea rushes up in deep blue and brilliant green waves of indescribable transparency. On a bright summer day the whole scene is one of unspeakable radiance. Delightful little walks wind round the western headland, where more groups of rock appear, as weird and fantastic as the first." * And across the stretch of azure sea lies the dim islet which Breton legend affirms is King Arthur's resting-place. When we consider the French sources of

* A. J. C. Hare's *North-Western France*.

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the history compiled by Geoffrey, Wace, and Map, the reasonableness of believing that Avalon was at first located in Brittany becomes at once apparent, and the wonder is that in this and many other cases the transference of the scenes to England should have been so complete or that English equivalents should have been so readily accepted.

The more obscure names of places would doubtless be identified if the search were more assiduous in Brittany than in Britain, and if the original Breton nomenclature were used as a basis. Tristram, Iseult, and Lancelot at least are French, and the prevailing tone of the romances in which they figure is French; we must look to Brittany for some part of the scenery.* At various times it has been stated that Sir Lancelot's Joyous Gard was none other than Alnwick, or else Bamborough Castle, in Northumberland, a structure which dates from the year 554, and

* "Il est donc constant que la chevalerie prit naissance en Bretagne," says Emile Souvestre, "et y brilla de tout son éclat; que les premiers poèmes chevaleresques furent écrits en langue celtique. Les monuments, les traditions, *les noms*, les indications des plus anciens auteurs s'accordent pour faire de la Bretagne la patrie de tout ce monde chevaleresque et féérique dont, plus tard, le Tasse et l'Arioste tirèrent tant de parti."

may have been the site of an earlier stronghold.* But why Sir Lancelot, a Breton Knight of Arthur's Court, whose exploits are confined to Lyonesse, the southern portion of King Arthur's territory, should have had his castle located in the north cannot be determined, unless we so far revise our opinions as to credit (as some have done) the existence of a Scotch knight of that name. Instead of looking to Northumberland for Sir Lancelot's stronghold, and endeavouring to identify Bamborough as his residence, why not turn straightway to France, his native land, and accept such facts as are there to be found? The chronicle of Malory itself says that Joyous Gard was "over sea." Beyond the forest of Landerneau may still be seen the traditional site of a Chateau de la Joyeuse-Garde, with an ancient gateway and a Gothic vault of the twelfth century remaining. Here at least we find the name; the Breton regards the spot as that which Lancelot, the Breton knight, claimed as his own; and the

* Bamborough Castle, says Professor Burrows, was the centre of the Kingdom of Bryneck, or Bernicia. "In founding it the Angles encountered a determined opposition at the hands of a British chief named Arthur. Whether he is the same as the Arthur of South-Western Britain, or whether the exploits of one have been transferred by legend to the other, is still under dispute."

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scene is in that Armorica from which the original traditions sprang, or, at least, where they took earliest root.* In addition to Joyous Gard, Brittany boasts of its Tristan Island in the Bay of Douarnenez, named after the "Tristan des Léonais" who was the rival of King Mark. King Mark, too ("Marc'h," in the original, signifying horse, and so named because of his pointed ears), has his own locality, for according to Breton legend he was not ruler of Cornwall but of Plo-marc'h, which place lies a little to the east of Douarnenez and contains the ruins of his "palace." But Renan justly inquired, if Armorica saw the birth of the Arthurian cycle, how was it that we failed to find there any traces of the nativity?

Cameliard is a tract in some respects not so hard to define or locate as Lyonesse. The town of Brecknock, three miles from which is Arthur's Hill, seems to have marked one of its borders, and its capital was a now undiscoverable city, Carohaise. Ritson believes that Arthur's kingdom could not have been considerable, and he is disposed to grant him the lordship only over Devon and Cornwall, with perhaps some territory

* According to Villemarqué the name of Lancelot is a translation of that of the Welsh hero Maëh, who exhibits the fullest analogy with the Lancelot of the French romances.

in South Wales, the land called Gore or Gower. Be that as it may, his name, by a series of links, extends from Cornwall to Northumberland, from the Scillies to London, and from London to Carlisle. The British tribe, the Silures, to which Arthur belonged, occupied the region now divided into the counties of Hereford, Monmouth and Glamorgan. Brecknock and Radnor may have been added, and it is certain that Arthur had supreme dominion over Cornwall and part of Somerset and Devon. Any "kings" of these places, such as Erbin, father of Geraint, must have been tributary to him. Tacitus has left us an account of the valour, the determination, and the warrior qualities of the Silures, who had Iberian blood in their veins. It was after the Roman and Saxon invasions that they removed their seat of Government from London to Siluria, Arthur having his court at Caerleon. The Britons were a Christian race, for that religion had been introduced among the Latinised Brythonic tribes before the end of the second century. This race prevailed over the Goidels and Ivernians in the territory, and on the recall of the Roman legions one of the Brythons succeeded the Dux Britanniæ and thus became the head of the Cymry (or Cambroges, "fellow-countrymen"). Saxon

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Cerdic and his son Cymric for twenty years found it impossible to break through the forest districts west of the Avon, which formed the outwork of the British forces; and we may almost take it for granted that at one time the whole of the west country was in Arthur's power, a line from Liddesdale in the north to the southern extremity of Lyonesse, taking in Cumberland, Wales (and perhaps Staffordshire and Shropshire), Devon and Cornwall, roughly marking the boundary. But his reported excursions north of the Trent and to the east counties would also lead to the inference that for some time the tribe overran the major part of the country. Hence we can account for the large number of scattered memorials of the monarch found in all parts of the land, though superstition may have attached his name to many places where he was absolutely unknown. Arthur's Seats, or Quoits, abound. They are to be found both in North and South Wales, and the name seems to have been given to any rock or commanding situation which in the popular fancy was fit to bear it. In Anglesey, in the wooded grounds of Llwyliarth, a seat of the Lloyd family, a rocking stone, the famous Maen Chwf, is called Arthur's Quoit. Cefn Bryn ridge in Glamorganshire, an imposing elevation, is crowned with a

cromlech, together with numerous cairns and tumuli. The cromlech, known as Arthur's Stone, is a mass of millstone grit fourteen feet long and seven feet two inches deep, and rests upon a number of upright supporters each five feet high. In the Welsh Triads this cromlech, which is near the turnpike road from Reynoldstone to Swansea, is alluded to as "the big stone of Sketty," and it ranks as one of the wonders of Wales. Another such stone is to be found in Moccas parish, Herefordshire, the cromlech in this case being eighteen feet long, nine feet broad, and twelve feet thick, and supported originally by eleven upright pillars. The colossal king was to have colossal monuments. Brecknockshire has several imposing memorials of Arthur. Five miles south of Brecon rise the twin peaks of the mountain range, and they are designated Arthur's Chair. A massive British cromlech adjoining the park of Mocras Court is called Arthur's Table. On the edge of Gossmoor there is a large stone upon which are impressed marks resembling four horse-shoes. Tradition asserts that these marks were made by the horse King Arthur rode when he resided at Castle Denis and hunted on the moors. Between Mold and Denbigh is Moel Arthur, an ancient British fort, defended by two ditches of great

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depth. At Rhuthyn (Ruthin) in the vicinity King Arthur is said to have beheaded his enemy Huail (Howel), to whom Gildas refers. The record might be extended indefinitely, though no valid argument can be based upon any of the facts. The indiscriminate use of Arthur's name often shows an extravagance of imagination and a reckless disregard of what is appropriate. Between Mold and Ruthin, for instance, is Maen Arthur, a stone which popular fancy has adjudged to bear the exact impression of the hoof of the king's steed. There is something like substantial reason for believing that the British hero was connected with Monmouth, Cardiff, and even with Dover, and either the Arthur of the Silures or another British chief seems to have reached Carlisle—that is, if the chronicles did not confuse Cardoile with Carduel. The Cumbrian Arthur figures in two ancient ballads, "The Marriage of Gawaine," and "The Boy and the Mantle," while Scott's poem of Arthur and his Court at Carlisle is, of course, too well known to need more than a reference. In the time of Baeda Carlisle was known as Lugubalia, which name by corruption became Luel. The British prefix *Caer*, a stone fort, made the name *Caer-Luel*, and as such it was long known. It gradually degenerated into *Carliol*,

and finally became Carlisle. That the ancient city should have become confused with Caerleon is natural and explicable. Yet Arthur's connection with a portion of the north is strongly insisted on. Where Wigan now stands he fought a famous battle. Pendragon Castle in Westmoreland claims him as its founder; and passing by easy stages we find ourselves confronted with a Northumbrian Arthur. From this point the transition to Scotland itself is extremely easy, the lowland part of that country being claimed as the veritable Cameliard.

According to no mean authority, we must leave England entirely and search in the North alone for the sites, not only of King Arthur's battles, but for all the places connected with his exploits and his residence. Badon is then found in Linlithgowshire at Bowden Hill, and the great battle of Arderydd is located at Arthuret in Liddesdale. The Scotch Merlin and the Scotch Lancelot are the king's companions, and a Scotch Gildas is the historian. The resting place of Avalon is then found in the caverns of the Eildon Hills, and the voice to rouse him from his charmed sleep will echo through them and "peal proud Arthur's march from fairyland." As a curious fact it may be mentioned that nearly all the heroes of the

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"Four Ancient Books of Wales" are traced to Scotland, and admittedly in the Arthurian legend the British king was connected with as northern a place as the Orkneys by the marriage of his sister to the king of those islands. Of King Arthur, the Scotch ballad rudely tells that when he ruled that land he "ruled it like a swine." The story of the king was the diversion of James V., who may have known that Drummelzier on the Tweed could boast of a Holy Thorn like Glastonbury, that there was an Arthur's Oven on the Carron near Falkirk, and that Guinevere's sepulchre was at Meikle in Strathmore. Edinburgh, or Agnet, is positively represented as the site where the Castle of Maidens stood, and the lion-shaped Arthur's Hill is supposed to confirm the tradition that here the king abode and made his name.* His tomb is pointed out in Perthshire, and all the machinery of the romances is claimed as of Scotch origin and invention. The names of localities are traced, and by transporting Arthur boldly to the Lowlands we account more easily for his rapid incursions into Northumberland and of the country north of the Trent, if we cannot

* "Arthur's seat" may be but an adaptation of the Gaelic *Ard-na-said*, or "the height of the arrows."

for his equally rapid journeys to Dover and Almesbury and Winchester.

Are not the interchangeability of names and the duplication of persons and places susceptible of a very simple explanation? Caerleon, or Carduel, was confused with Carlisle, each in itself a fitting and likely place for Arthurian exploits; the historians were grievously misled as to Winchester and the part it occupied in the romances; and we know now that various contradictions simply arose from the confusion in the minds of the chroniclers, who never seemed to have been quite certain whether Caledonia and Calydon were not one and the same, whether Camelot was inland or by the sea, whether Joyous Gard was a few days' or a few months' journey from Cornwall, whether Camelot was in England or in Wales, whether Arthur's "owne castell" at Tintagel could be reached by "riding all night" from London, or whether Lyonesse was Cornwall or Brittany. A hundred topographical complexities meet us wherever we look, and the sole conclusion of the matter is that Geoffrey and his successors inextricably mixed Scotch, Welsh, and Armoric details both in regard to the stories and the localities. The historians made no effort to be con-

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sistent in their allusions, to reconcile contradictory statements, or to account for abrupt changes of scene from the South-West to the North. While they endeavoured to concentrate Arthur's kingdom in South Wales and Cornwall they made occasional sweeps to Berwick and Edinburgh, and annihilated the distance between Dover and Carlisle. To add to the confusion there were names, especially in the Lowlands of Scotland and in the West of England, of the same derivation, and, as Mr. Glennie has demonstrated, it is as easy to discover a Caledonian Caerleon, Avalon, or Camelot as it is to discover any of them in the district once called Cameliard. The unravelling of the skein, which became more and more entangled as new hands developed the romances, is now almost an impossibility. Arthur's own name was changed, and it has been affirmed that he is still confused with Arthurius of Gwent, and with others of like name who were distinct persons. The conclusion of the whole matter must be that names in the romances are a source of error and confusion; that different significances were attached to them by the chroniclers themselves, and that if the truth be ever established totally new meanings may be expected.

Let me here give one instance of possible con-

fusion of names, and broach a somewhat bold theory. The name Camelford, the scene of the last battle, is by some said to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon *gafol*, meaning "tribute," the spot so called marking the ford where of old time tribute was paid. The name Guildford is also declared to have a similar signification, and, in fact, to be but a variation of Camelford. If this be so, a curious point arises. Guildford is mentioned towards the close of the Arthurian history. Sir Lancelot and the king having parted company, it is recorded that Arthur "departed towards Winchester with his fellowship. And so by the way the king lodged in a towne called Astolat, which is now in English called Gilford." Upon this Mr. Aldis Wright observes: "Guildford in Surrey is no doubt the place alluded to; but I am not aware that the name of Astolat or Astolot (Caxton) is given to it in any authentic history." It may be argued that King Arthur would be more likely to pass through Guildford, Surrey, than through Camelford, Cornwall. But his starting point is not certain, and it must be specially noted that the Winchester to which he was making his way was not Winchester in Hampshire but "Camelot, that is, Winchester" (Book XVIII., c. 9). The unauthorised and even absurd interpolation that

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Camelot was Winchester at once changes the whole argument. Disregarding this misleading explanation we find that Arthur was on his way to Camelot from one of his Courts, and if Camelot was in Somersetshire it is most likely that Camelford would be one of the intermediate stages. But the importance of the whole contention is this: Astolat, as frequently mentioned in connection with the "faire maide" Elaine and Sir Lancelot's worthiest love episode, is undiscoverable. The name is unknown outside romance; and though we are assured that it is "now in English called Gilford," no authority can be found for the assertion. Besides, Guildford in Surrey was rather beyond the borders of the British Kingdom, even granting occasional excursions to Middlesex and Kent. But if Guildford were synonymous with Camelford, as the derivation permits us to believe, then Astolat was none other than Camelford, and at once there are light and order where formerly prevailed obscurity and confusion. Another point worth mention is that, although tradition marks Camelford as the actual scene of important events in the Arthurian history, and although from its situation, its proximity to Tintagel, and its steep hill suitable to be crowned by a baron's castle such as Sir Bernard of Astolat

possessed, we may safely surmise that it was well known to the ever-journeying knights, yet the actual name of Camelford is never mentioned in the chronicles. As it was of Anglo-Saxon origin, this omission would easily be accounted for in the earliest records, while if Astolat was the traditional name it is at once clear how it could equally be applied to Camelford and to Guildford. We must of course remember that where the chroniclers themselves sought to elucidate they too often confused; the finger-posts they set up have started many upon weary and fruitless journeys, and the guidance offered with such confidence turns out most commonly to be the most random of guesses. If, however, we may place the slightest credence in the "Astolat, which is now in English called Gilford," as much can be said for "Gilford" being "Gafolford" or Camelford, as for its being "Gyldeford" or Guildford. The stretch of low-lying level fields on either side of the Camel, the sharp-peaked hills in the distance, the dark meres among the hills, and the angry sea lashing against the rocks visible a mile or two away, all accord with the typical scenery of King Arthur's realm, and make us not unwilling to believe that famous Astolat was here to be found.

When all is told, when all the searching is

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ended, it is found that some half-dozen places only stand out pre-eminent from the host of localities in the West in each of which only a single seed seems to have germinated; and these half-dozen places, like the last citadels of the hero, resist every effort and assault of the invader to dislodge the traditions of Arthur. I have not attempted to write a history of these places, but only to say something of their aspect to-day and of the chief events and ancient traditions linked with their names. Now and again I mention facts of later date for the purpose of showing that these famous spots have continued to be the centres of activity and connected with great characters; but in the main I confine myself to the legends of Arthur and to the episodes of chivalry. To have attempted more would have entailed not only a far more comprehensive work, but the treatment of the subject in a more scientific spirit than is here displayed. The object has been to deal rather with the romantic side than with the technical, for which the deep scholarship of a Rhys or a Müller alone can be the qualification. It is necessary to premise also that of the most conspicuous Arthurian localities nothing but the bare tradition can be recorded.

That tradition lives and is cherished, but its origin is undiscoverable. The sap lingers in the branches, but the roots are detached and lost. The legend is spread everywhere, but there are no verities. The visitor to the Arthurian scenes finds nothing but eponymous names and superstitions—indeed, the evidence present leads him to other conclusions than those he seeks. He looks for a British encampment, and he finds a *post-Roman*; he looks for a relic of Arthur, and he finds one of Antoninus. What is persistently ascribed to the British hero, or associated with his times, is either intangible or is irreconcilable with existing facts. Castles he is said to have inhabited were built centuries after his death, and there can only remain the free speculation that they mark the site of a former structure of which no trace remains and of which no record was made. Spots which are called King Arthur's grave, or his seat, or his hunting-ground, or his camp, neither he nor his band, it often happens, could ever have been near. We look for persons, and we find a crowd of phantoms; we eagerly watch for demonstrations, and we find myth and fable; we hope to see the clear page of history, and we find a page that is undecipherable or blotted with shadows. Re-

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ords are effaced, song and story delude, the track to truth is almost closed. Everything crumbles into dust at the touch, like Guinevere's golden hair, and nothing is now left but the pure romance. And some of us may be content and almost glad to have it so.

CHAPTER III

OF ARTHUR THE KING AND MERLIN THE ENCHANTER

“ No matter whence we do derive our name,
All Brittany shall ring of Merlin’s fame,
And wonder at his Arts.”

The Birth of Merlin, Act III. sc. iv.

“ He by wordes could call out of the sky
Both sunne and moone, and make them him obey;
The land to sea, and sea to maineland dry,
And darksome night he eke could turn to day;
That to this day, for terror of his fame
The feendes do quake when any him to them does
name.”—*Spenser*.

THE fact that the name Art(h)us does not occur in the Gildas manuscript has led to the inference that the king was unknown to that chronicler; and the assumption that he is alluded to as Ursus (the Bear) tends to confirm the theory of those who would affirm that he is no more than a solar myth. It must be understood that the Arthur of romance, as we now know him, was a character ever increasing in importance and prominence as the history was re-written and elaborated; at first

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a minor actor in the drama, he at length became the leading figure and the centre around which all the other characters were grouped. The Arthur of the historian Nennius is the original personage to whom all the famed attributes have been accorded by subsequent writers. With so much doubt and confusion, involving the identity of the person himself, it is inevitable that even more doubt and confusion should exist when we come to detailed events. Even the name of Arthur's father is variously given, a circumstance which caused Milton to question the veracity of the whole history; and the date of his birth, of his death, the age at which he died, and other smaller points, lead to nothing but endless contradiction. The number of his battles is variously given as twelve and seventy-six; he is said to have wedded not one but three Guineveres (Gwenhwyvar); his age at death varies from just over thirty years to over ninety; and the date of the last battle is 537, 542, or 630.* King Arthur's actual name

* Arthur's career has been thus conveniently summarised : " At the age of fifteen he succeeded his father as King of Damnonium. He was born in 452, had three wives, of whom Guinevere was the second, and was betrayed by the third during his absence in Armorica. Mordred concluded a league with Arthur's great foe, Cedric the Saxon; and at the age of ninety, after seven years' continual war, the famous king was defeated at Camelford in 543." Fuller

may have been Arthur Mab-Uther; his genealogical line has been traced back to Helianis, nephew of Joseph; the year 501 is now usually accepted as the date of his birth; and St. David, son of a prince of Cardiganshire, is mentioned not only as his contemporary but as a near relative.

compares him to Hercules in (1) his illegitimate birth, (2) his arduous life, and (3) his twelve battles. Joseph Ritson, whose antiquarian researches are noted for their fullness and originality, came to the conclusion that though there were "fable and fabrication" in the hero, a real Arthur lies behind the legendary hero. He appeared when the affairs of the Britons were at their worst after Vortigern's death, checked the ravages of the Romans, and kept the pillaging Saxons at bay. Professor Montagu Burrows, in his commentaries on the history of England, argues that the Cymry of Arthur's time were a band of Romano-Britons who produced leaders like Cunedda to take command of the native forces left by the departing Romans. They remained more British than Gaelic, but were gradually driven, with their faces to the foe, into Wales and the Welsh borderland. "The Arthurian legends," he continues, "embody a whole world of facts which have been lost to history in the lapse of time, and form a poetry far from wholly fictitious." Renan declares that few heroes owe less to reality than Arthur. "Neither Gildas nor Aneurin, his contemporaries, speaks of him; Bede did not know his name; Taliesin and Llwarç'h Hên gave him only a secondary place. In Nennius, on the other hand, who lived about 850, the legend has been fully unfolded. Arthur is already the exterminator of the Saxons; he has never experienced defeat; he is the suzerain of an army of kings. Finally, in Geoffrey of Monmouth, the epic creation culminates."

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If the Sagas were compared with the Arthurian romances numerous points of resemblance could be shown. Olaf is the Arthur of the story, Gudrun the Guinevere, and Odin is the Merlin, while the city of Drontheim serves as Caerleon. The story recounting how Arthur magically obtained his sword Excalibur finds an exact parallel in the story of Sigmund, Volsung's son; and even the emblem of the dragon is not lacking,* for in the story of the Volsung we learn that Sigurd's shield bore the image of that monster, "and with even such-like image was adorned helm, and saddle, and coat-armour." But again it must be remembered that Arthur's kingdom is reported to have extended to Iceland itself; in fact, the bounds of his kingdom were only set by the chroniclers where their own definite geographical knowledge ended.

"We cannot bring within any limits of history," Sir Edward Strachey has properly said, "the events which here succeed each other, when the Lords and Commons of England, after the death of King Uther at St. Albans, assembled at the greatest church of London, guided by the

* Ashmole, in his *History of the Order of the Garter*, declares that, in addition to the dragon, King Arthur placed the picture of St. George on his banner.

joint policy of the magician Merlin and the Christian bishop of Canterbury, and elected Arthur to the throne; when Arthur made Caerleon, or Camelot, or both, his headquarters in a war against Cornwall, Wales, and the North, in which he was victorious by the help of the King of France; when he met the demand for tribute by the Roman Emperor Lucius with a counter-claim to the empire for himself as the real representative of Constantine, held a parliament at York to make the necessary arrangements, crossed the sea from Sandwich to Barflete in Flanders, met the united forces of the Romans and Saracens in Burgundy, slew the emperor in a great battle, together with his allies, the Soudan of Syria, the King of Egypt, and the King of Ethiopia, sent their bodies to the Senate and Podesta of Rome as the only tribute he would pay, and then followed over the mountains through Lombardy and Tuscany to Rome, where he was crowned emperor by the Pope, 'sojourned there a time, established all the lands from Rome into France, and gave lands and realms unto his servants and knights,' and so returned home to England, where he seems thenceforth to have devoted himself wholly to his duties as the head of Christian knighthood."

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This is the very monstrosity of fable, the grossness of which carries with it its own condemnation. These facts, however, are not insisted upon by Malory, though such claims for Arthur were made by the credulous and less scrupulous writers. Romance has entirely remodelled his character, and has filled in all the gaps in his life-story in that triumphant manner in which Celtic genius manifests its power. The legendary Arthur is made to realise the sublime prophecies of Merlin, and as those prophecies waxed more bold and arrogant in the course of ages the proportions of the hero were magnified to suit them. Merlin had cherished the hope of the coming of a victorious chief under whom the Celts should be united, but the slaughter at Arderydd when the rival tribes fought each other, almost destroyed all such aspirations. Nevertheless the prophet foretold the continuance of discord among the British tribes, until the chief of heroes formed a federation on returning to the world, and his prediction concluded with the haunting words: "Like the dawn he will arise from his mysterious retreat." Mr. Stuart Glennie calls Merlin a barbarian compound of madman and poet, prophet and bard, but denies that he was a mythic personage or a poetic creation. He was, like Arthur

himself, an actual pre-mediæval personage, and, as in the case of Arthur, we have no means of determining his origin, his nationality, or the *locale* of his wanderings. But if, as Wilson observes in one of his "Border Tales," tradition is "the fragment which history has left or lost in its progress, and which poetry following in its wake has gathered up as treasures, breathed upon them its influence and embalmed them in the memories of men unto all generations," we shall extract a residuum of truth from the fanciful fables of which Merlin is the subject.

Myrdin Emrys, the Welsh Merlin, is claimed as a native of Bassalleg, an obscure town in the district which lies between the river Usk and Rhymney. The chief authority for this is Nennius; but according to others the birthplace was Carmarthen, at the spot marked by Merlin's tree, regarding which the prophecy runs that when the tree tumbles down Carmarthen will be overwhelmed with woe. What we know of Merlin in Malory's chronicle is that he was King Arthur's chief adviser, an enchanter who could bring about miraculous events, and to whom was delivered the royal babe upon a ninth wave of the ocean; a prophet who foretold his sovereign's death, his own fate, and the infidelity of Guinevere; a

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warrior, the founder of the Round Table, and the wise man who "knew all things." Wales and Scotland alike claim as their own this most striking of the characters in the Arthurian story. Brittany also holds to the belief that Merlin was the most famous and potent of her sons, and that his influence is still exercised over that region. Matthew Arnold, gazing at the ruins of Carnac, saw from the heights he clambered the lone coast of Brittany, stretching bright and wide, weird and still, in the sunset; and recalling the old tradition, he described how—

" It lay beside the Atlantic wave
As though the wizard Merlin's will
Yet charmed it from his forest grave."

The Scotch Merlin, Merlin Sylvester, or Merlin the Wild, was Merdwyynn of the haugh of Drummelziar, a delightful lowland region, where the little sparkling Pausayl burn bickers down between the heather-clad hills until it mixes its waters with the Tweed. He is said to have taken to the woods of Upper Tweeddale in remorse for the death of his nephew, though it is more likely that he lost his reason after the decisive defeat of the Cymry by the Christians of the sixth century. Sir Walter Scott records that in the

Scotichronicon, to which work however no historic importance can be ascribed, as it is notoriously a priestly invention, is an account of an interview betwixt St. Kentigern and Merdwyynn Wyllt when he was in this distracted and miserable state. The saint endeavoured to convert the recluse to Christianity, for he was a nature-worshipper, as his poems show. From his mode of life he was called Lailoken, and on the saint's commanding him to explain his situation, he stated that he was doing penance imposed upon him by a voice from heaven for causing a bloody conflict between Lidel and Carwanolow. He continued to dwell in the woods of Caledon, frequenting a fountain on the hills, enjoying the companionship of his sister Gwendydd ("The Dawn"), and ever musing upon his early love Hurmleian (The Gleam), both of whom were frequently mentioned in his poems. His fate was a singular one, and has been confused with that of the Merlin of Arthur. He predicted that he should perish at once by wood, earth, and water, and so it came to pass; for being pursued and stoned by the rustics—others say by the herdsmen of the Lord of Lanark—he fell from a rock into the river Tweed, and was transfixed by a sharp stake—

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" Sude perfossus, lapide percussus, et unda,
Hæc tria Merlinum fertur inire necem.
Sicque ruit, mersusque lignoque prehensus,
Et fecit vatem per terna pericular verum."

The grave of the Scotch Merlin is pointed out at Drummelziar, where it is marked by an aged thorn-tree. On the east side of the churchyard the Pausayl brook falls into the Tweed, and a prophecy ran thus:—"When Tweed and Pausayl join at Merlin's grave, Scotland and England shall one monarch have." And we learn accordingly that on the day of the coronation of James VI the Tweed overflowed and joined the Pausayl at the prophet's grave. The predictions of this Merlin continued for many centuries to impress the Scotch, and he seems to have had a reputation equal to that of Thomas the Rhymer. Geoffrey of Monmouth was the first to introduce a Merlin into the Arthurian romance, and whether that Merlin had for a prototype Merdwyynn Wyllt, or whether there was in reality a Merlin of Wales, remains an open question. All that can be said definitely is that similar deeds are ascribed to both, that each occupies a similar place among his contemporaries, that their rhapsodical prophecies partake of the same character, and that their mysterious deaths have points in common. But it is



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle]

MERLIN'S CAVE, TINTAGEL

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contended that the *vates* of Vortigern and of Aurelius Ambrosius, the companion and adviser of Uther Pendragon and of Arthur, was Myrdin Emrys, who took his name from Dinas Emrys in the Vale of Waters, whose haunt was the rugged heights of Snowdon, and who knew nothing of the Merlin Caledonius who wandered about the heathery hills of Drummelziar, who was present at the battle of Arderydd in 573, and who lamented in wild songs the defeat of the pagans and the shattering reverse to the Cymric cause. These poems, which bewail the fortunes of this unfortunate race, seem to have found their way into the famous Ancient Books of Wales, thus tending further to confuse the two Merlins, and resulting in the old chroniclers ascribing the acts of both to the Myrdin Emrys of King Arthur's court. The late Professor Veitch's poem on Merlin contains some specimens of Merdwynn Wyllt's verse, and sets forth his faith in nature, tinged a little as it were by the Christianity of the era.

The Merlin of King Arthur was reputed to be a native of Carmarthen among other places, and at three miles' distance from the town may be seen "Merlin's Cave," one of the traditional places of his mysterious entombment. Merlin's birth

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formed the subject of one of the apocryphal plays of Shakespeare: the weird magician and worker of enchantment would have been worthy of the masters' own depiction. In the romances he comes with mystery and awe, and he departs with mystery and shame. "Men say that Merlin was begotten of a devil," said Sir Uwayne; and the maid Nimuë (Vivien) on whom he was "assotted," grew weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, "for she was afraid of him because he was a devil's son." In that wondrously rich drama of 1662, "The Birth of Merlin," the popular tradition is taken up that the arch-magician was the son of the arch-fiend. The story introduces Aurelius and Vortiger (Vortigern), the two Kings of Britain; Ut(h)er Pendragon, the brother of Aurelius; Ostorius, the Saxon general; and other historic characters of the era. The chief point of the plot is the search for and identification of Merlin's father; and, that matter settled, the dramatist treats of Merlin's supernatural skill, his prophecies, and his aid of Vortiger in building the castle which hostile fiends broke down by night as fast as it was built by day. Merlin is represented as born with the beard of an old man, able to talk and walk, and within a few hours of his birth explaining to his

mother that he reads a book "to sound the depth of arts, of learning, wisdom, knowledge."

"I can be but half a man at best,
And that is your mortality; the rest
In me is spirit. 'Tis not meat nor time
That gives this growth and bigness. No, my years
Shall be more strange than yet my birth appears."

He prophesies forthwith, recognises his father, the Devil, at a glance, gives proof of his miraculous powers in many ways; and proceeding to Vortiger's court baffles the native magicians, and shows the king why his castle cannot be built by reason of the dragons in conflict. He foretells that the victory of the white dragon means the ultimate victory of the Saxons—"the white horror who, now knit together, have driven and shut you up in these wild mountains," and that the king who won his throne by bloodshed must yield it to Prince Uter. The prediction is verified, and after Vortiger's death Merlin is sent for to expound "the fiery oracle" in the form of a dragon's head,

"From out whose mouth
Two flaming lakes of fire stretch east and west,
And . . . from the body of the star
Seven smaller blazing streams directly point
On this affrighted kingdom."

The portent causes terror, until Merlin, as inter-

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preter, tells of revolutions, the rise and fall of nations, and the changes in Britain's state which it signifies. Aurelius has been treacherously slain at Winchester by the Saxons, and Prince Uter is to be his avenger. The passage in which Merlin relates what is to come is one of singular dignity and impressiveness. Seven rays are "speaking heralds" to the island. Uter Pendragon is to have a son and a daughter. The latter will be Queen of Ireland, while of the son "thus Fate and Merlin tells"—

"All after times shall fill their chronicles
With fame of his renown, whose warlike sword
Shall pass through fertile France and Germany,
Nor shall his conquering foot be forced to stand,
Till Rome's imperial wealth hath crowned his fame
With monarch of the west; from whose seven hills
With conquest, and contributory kings
He back returns to enlarge the Briton bounds,
His heraldry adorned with thirteen crowns.
He to the world shall add another worthy,
And, as a loadstone, for his prowess draw
A train of martial lovers to his court.
It shall be then the best of knighthood's honour
At Winchester to fill his castle hall,
And at his Royal table sit and feast
In warlike orders, all their arms round hurled
As if they meant to circumscribe the world."

This is a noble passage, and sums up the leading points in King Arthur's history, as related in

the Fabliaux, and at the same time serves as evidence of the power of divination and eloquence of Merlin. The matter of the prophecy was obviously taken from Malory, but the dramatist introduced one strange variation in his story. Merlin, indignant that his demoniac father should strive to harm his mother, uses his art and magic spells to enclose the Devil in a rock—an idea suggested, no doubt, by Merlin's own fate. Furthermore, finding himself called to aid Pendragon against the Saxons, Merlin conducts his mother to a place of retirement called Merlin's Bower, and tells her that when she dies he will erect a monument—

“ Upon the verdant plains of Salisbury—
(No king shall have so high a sepulchre)—
With pendulous stones that I will hang by art,
Where neither lime nor mortar shall be used,
A dark enigma to the memory,
For none shall have the power to number them.”

Here we become acquainted with the superstition that the megalithic wonders of Stonehenge were Merlin's workmanship, and that the mysterious structure was his mother's tomb. Another idea was that it was the burial place of Uther Pendragon and Constantine. The drama, so far as it relates to Merlin and Vortigern, closely follows the popular tradition, though there are

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several variations of the story of the castle which could not be finished, and its site, as might be expected, is the subject of many contradictory declarations. The allegorical meaning of the story is quite clear. To the heights of Snowdon, it is said, Merlin led King Vortigern, whose castle could not be built for meddlesome goblins. The wizard led the monarch to a vast cave and showed him two dragons, white and red, in furious conflict. "Destroy these," he said, "and the goblins whom they rule will cease to torment you." Vortigern slew the dragons of Hate and Conspiracy, and his castle was completed.*

* Mr. Glennie thinks the scene is in Carnarvonshire, to the south of Snowdon, overlooking the lower end of Llyn y Dinas. Here is Dinas Emrys, a singular isolated rock, clothed on all sides with wood, containing on the summit some faint remains of a building defended by ramparts. It was of this place Drayton wrote—

"And from the top of Brith, so high and wondrous steep
Where Dinas Emrys stood, showed where the serpents
fought,
The White that tore the Red; from whence the prophet
wrought
The Briton's sad decay then shortly to ensue."

On the south of Carnarvon Bay is Nant Gwrtheryn, the Hollow of Vortigern, a precipitous ravine by the sea, said to be the last resting-place of the usurper, when he fled to escape the rage of his subjects on finding themselves betrayed to the Saxons.

The story of Merlin's death has again led to much speculation upon the recondite subject of the situation of the tomb in which his "quick" body was placed by the guile of Nimuë, or Vivien, one of the damsels of the lake. Malory distinctly avers that it was in Cornwall that the doting wizard met his fate. He went into that country, after showing Nimuë many wonders, and "so it happed that Merlin showed to her a rock, whereat was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone." By subtle working the maiden induced the wizard to go under the stone to tell her of the marvels there, and then she "so wrought him" that with all his own crafts he could not emerge again. Some time afterwards Sir Bagdemagus, riding to an adventure, heard Merlin's doleful cries from under the stone, but he was unable to help him, as the stone was so heavy that a hundred men could not move it. Merlin told the knight that no one could rescue him but the woman who had put him there, and, according to some traditions, he lives to this day in the vault. Spenser, in the *Faërie Queene*, describes the tomb as—

"A hideous, hollow, cave-like bay
Under a rock that has a little space
From the swift Tyvi, tumbling down apace
Amongst the woody hills of Dynevowr."

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The Tyvi is known to us as the Towy, and Dynevowr is Dynevor Park.

“ There the wise Merlin, whilom wont, they say,
To make his wonne low underneath the ground,
In a deep delve far from view of day,
That of no living wight he might be found,
When so he counselled with his sprights around.”

Others say that the guileful damsel led her doting lover to Snowdon, and there put forth the charm of woven paces and of waving hands until he lay as dead in a hollow oak. Sometimes an eldritch cry breaks upon the ear of the climber as he nears the summit of Snowdon: it is Merlin lamenting the subtlety of his false love, which doomed him to perpetual shame.

There is the Carmarthen cave, and there is a “Merlin’s Grave” four miles from Caerleon, both of which are shown as Merlin’s resting-place. But ancient bards told another strange tale of the fate of the “boy without a father,” whose blood had once been sought to sprinkle upon the cement for the bricks of Vortigern’s castle. They declared that the enchanter was sent out to sea in a vessel of glass, accompanied by nine bards, or prophets, and neither vessel nor crew was heard of again—which is not surprising. But Lady Charlotte Guest, in her notes to the *Mabinogion*, boldly transports the scene of Merlin’s

doom to the Forest of Brécéliande, in Brittany, one of the favoured haunts of romance and the delight of the Trouvères. Vivien, to whose artifices he succumbed, is said to have been the daughter of one Vavasour, who married a niece of the Duchess of Burgundy, and received as dowry half the Forest of Briogne. It was when Merlin and Vivien were going through Brécéliande hand in hand that they found a bush of white thorn laden with flowers; there they rested, and the magician fell asleep. Then Vivien, having been taught the art of enchantment by Merlin, rose and made a ring nine times with her wimple round the bush; and when the wizard woke it seemed to him that he was enclosed in the strongest tower ever made—a tower without walls and without chains, which he alone had known the secret of making. From this enmeshment Merlin could never escape, and, plead as he would, the damsel would not release him: But it is written that she often regretted what she had done and could not undo, for she had thought the things he had taught her could not be true. This, however, seems to be an interpolation. Sir Gawain, travelling through the forest, saw a “kind of smoke,” and heard Merlin’s wailing voice addressing him out of the obscurity. The wonders of the Forest of Brécéliande were

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sufficiently believed in of old time that we find the chronicler Wace actually journeying to the spot to find the fairy fountain and Merlin's tomb. Another variation of the story is that Merlin made himself a sepulchre in the Forest of Arvantes, that Vivien persuaded him to enter it, and then closed the lid in such manner that thereafter it could never be opened. Matthew Arnold, sparing and reticent in speech, as is his wont, describes Merlin's fate with subdued force and subtle charm, putting the story in the mouth of desolate Iseult, who told her children of the "fairy-haunted land" away the other side of Brittany, beyond the heaths, edged by the lonely sea; and of

"The deep forest glades of Broce-liand,
Through whose green boughs the golden sunshine creeps,
Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree sleeps."

Very cunningly and mystically has the poet told of Vivien's guile as she waved a wimple over the blossom'd thorn-tree and the sleeping dotard, until within "a little plot of magic ground," a "daisied circle," Merlin was made prisoner till the judgment day. Celtic mythology, Renan tells us, is nothing more than a transparent naturalism, the love of nature for herself, the vivid impression of her magic, accompanied by the sorrowful feeling that man knows. When face to face with her, he believes that he hears her commune with

him concerning his origin and destiny. "The legend of Merlin mirrors this feeling," he continues. "Seduced by a fairy of the woods, he flies with her and becomes a savage. Arthur's messengers come upon him as he is singing by a fountain; he is led back again to court, but the charm carries him away. He returns to his forests, and this time for ever."

"La forêt de Brocelinde," writes Emile Souvestre, in that fascinating and half-pathetic work, *Les Derniers Bretons*, "se trouve située dans le commune de Corcoret, arrondissement de Ploërmal. Elle est célébrée dans les romans de la table ronde. C'est là que l'on rencontre la fontaine de Baranton, le Val sans retour, la tombe de Merlin. On sait que ce magicien se trouve encore dans cette forêt, où il est retenu par les enchantements de Viviane à l'ombre d'un bois d'aubépine. Viviane avait essayé sur Merlin le charme qu'elle avait appris de lui-même, sans croire qu'il pût opérer; elle se désespéra quand elle vit que celui qu'elle adorait était à jamais perdu pour elle." This statement is not confirmed in the English romance, and is opposed wholly to the sentiment of the story as conceived by Tennyson and other modern writers. "On assure que Messire Gauvain (Gawain) et quelques chevaliers de la table ronde cherchèrent partout

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Merlin, mais en vain. Gauvain seul l'entendit dans la forêt de Brocelinde, mais ne put le voir." The district of Brocelinde, or Brécéliande, is rich in antiquities, dolmens and menhirs being found together with other relics of early times and the mysterious workers of the stone age. To add to the scenic attractions of the locality there are ruined castles, the remains of machicolated walls, ancient chateaux, and churches dating back many centuries. It is fitting that here, therefore, romance should maintain one of its strongholds and that traditions of the master-magician should linger.

There is yet one other legend which should be noted. It represents the magician as perpetually roaming about the wood of Calydon lamenting the loss of the chieftains in the battle of Arderydd; while yet another tells of a glass house built for him in Bardsey Island by his companion, the Gleam, in which house of sixty doors and sixty windows he studied the stars, and was attended by one hundred and twenty bards to write down his prophecies. Never was such a confusion of traditions and fancies, never were so many deluding will-o'-the-wisps to lead astray whosoever would strive to investigate the truth of Merlin's story. That story with its abundance of suggestion makes us think of the apt words of John Addington

Symonds, who said that the examination of these mysterious narratives was like opening a sealed jar of precious wine. "Its fragrance spreads abroad through all the palace of the soul, and the noble vintage upon being tasted courses through the blood and brain with the matured elixir of stored-up summers." One needs some such consolation as this for the vexation of finding seemingly inextricable confusion.

Warrior though he was, and all-powerful by reason of his supernatural gifts, Merlin is yet represented as being a peace-maker and as paying allegiance to a "master." He ended the great battle between Arthur and the eleven kings, when the horses went in blood up to the fetlocks, and out of three-score thousand men but fifteen thousand were left alive. Of this sanguinary battle of Bedgraine, Merlin gave an account to his master Blaise, or Bleys, journeying to Northumberland specially to do so and to get the master to write down the record; all Arthur's battles did Blaise chronicle from Merlin's reports. Attempts have been made to identify Blaise (the Wolf) with St. Lupus, Bishop of Troyes. The more impressive part which Merlin plays in the Arthurian drama is as prophet and necromancer. His sudden comings and goings, his disguises, his solemn warnings, his potent interventions, all these com-

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bine to strengthen the idea of unequalled influence and of awesome personality. He figures prominently in the story of Sir Balin le Savage, and it was his hand which wrote the fitting memorial of the two noble brothers. Merlin it was again who counselled the king to marry, and who brought Guinevere to London from Cameliard, darkly predicting at the same time that through the queen Arthur should come to his doom.

An ancient Cornish song, to be found in the original dialect, but in reality a Breton incantation which has come down to us from the far ages out of the abundance of Armoric lore, describes Merlin the Diviner attended by a black dog and searching at early day for

“The red egg of the marine serpent,
By the seaside in the hollow of the stone.”

Asked whither he is going he responds :

“I am going to seek in the valley
The green watercress and the golden grass,
And the top branch of the oak,
In the wood by the side of the fountain.”

A warning voice bids him turn back and not to seek the forbidden knowledge. The cress, the golden grass, the oak branch, and the red egg of the marine serpent are not for him. “Merlin! Merlin!” cries the voice,

“Retrace thy steps,
There is no diviner but God.”

It is like a moral message from Goethe's *Faust*.

There is no doubt that Merlin's death, which is no death, but a blind grovelling and eternal uselessness, was the mark of scorn put upon the magician who might have been prepotent, but who prostituted his powers—a feebleness and a degradation which were intolerable to the sturdy race who prized courage above all other qualities, and were incapable of realising the meaning of defeat or despair. That the counsellor should himself turn fool, and that the man of supernatural gifts should be prone to the weakness of nature, would be obnoxious to the Celtic imagination, and have its sequel in ribald allusion and endless taunts. The disaster which overtakes Merlin is one fitting for the coward or the buffoon, and is a fate altogether foreign to the ancient idea of that which was fitting for the hero, the bard, or the sage. It is noticeable that all the former services of Merlin are forgotten in judging him upon the closing despicable episode in his career and consigning him to timeless indolence and impotence. Shorn of his strength, a prisoner, living but “lost to use and fame,” Mage Merlin in his cave, victim to his own folly and a woman's wiles, awaits the last doom.

CHAPTER IV

OF TINTAGEL

“ There is a place within
The winding Severne sea,
On mids of rock, about whose foote
The tydes turn, keeping play,
A tower-y toppèd castle here,
Wide blazeth over all,
Which Corineus’ ancient broode
Tintagel Castle call.”—*Camden*.

“ Thou seest dark Cornwall’s rifted shore,
Old Arthur’s stern and rugged keep,
There, where proud billows dash and roar,
His haughty turret guards the deep.

“ And mark yon bird of sable wing,
Talons and beak all red with blood,
The spirit of the long-lost king
Passed in that shape from Camlan’s flood.”

R. S. Hawker.

CORNWALL, the horn-shaped land, far removed from the great centres of progress and industry, the land of giants, of a separate people who until the last century spoke its own language;* the

* The Cornish language was spoken until 1768. In that year Daines Barrington met the old fish-wife Dolly Pen-

land of holy wells and saints, of hut circles, dolmens, and earthwork forts, memorials of extreme antiquity; the land of many stone crosses indicating the early influence of Christianity; the land of so-called giants' quoits, chairs, spoons, punch-bowls, and mounds, sometimes the work of primitive man, sometimes the work of fantastic Nature—this is the land in which romance lingers and in which superstition thrives, the land upon which seems to rest unmoving the shadow of the past. Olden customs survive, the old fashion is not departed from. The quaintness, the simplicity, the quietude, the charm of a bygone age may be found yet in that part which Taylor, the water poet, described as “the compleate and replete Home of Abundance, noted for high churlish hills, and affable courteous People.”

A tour through the land which romance has marked out for her own, and where the fords, bridges, hills, and rocks are called after Arthur or associated by tradition with his exploits,

treath, whose name has become memorable as that of the last person to speak Cornish. The last sermon in Cornish was preached in 1678 in Landewednack Church. The slackening of the Saxon advance at the Tamar enabled the Cornish to preserve their tongue, closely allied to that of Wales and Brittany, and described as “naughty Englysshe” in the reign of the eighth Henry.

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becomes easier every year by the development of railways, little known in the wilder parts until a decade or so ago. It must be sorrowfully confessed that the visit to Tintagel, despite its charm, results in a certain amount of disillusion. It contains no relic, nothing that can verily be imagined a relic, of the old, old times when the flower of chivalry ruled. As one walks down the solitary street and glances around he sees that Tintagel is an antique, picturesque little place with its quaint post-office of yore—battered by time, the roof fallen, and the stonework disjointed—with its stunted cottages, its typical village shop and hostelry, and its lonely church on the cliffs. Tintagel, as it is, is unique, but it is not Arthurian unless we go direct to those parts where Nature is not and never has been molested. The Pentargon heights, the great gorges, the weird bays and caves, the rock-strewn valleys, the imposing waterfalls—from these may be constructed the scenery for the drama of the warlike king and his adventurous knights. The huge bank of earth enclosing an oblong space, with its remnant of stone-lining found near St. Breavard, is fitly called King Arthur's Hall. Such relics as are found in and near Tintagel are posterior to King Arthur's era. There is a Saxon cross to be seen,

erected to the memory of one Ælnat, a Saxon. A sybstel, or family pillar, with Saxon inscription, found in Lanteglos Church, near Camelford, and a Roman stone discovered in Tintagel churchyard, are ancient memorials of the highest interest. Relics of the bronze age have been discovered also, though the influence of the Phœnician tin-traders did not seemingly extend to this mid part of Cornwall.

Tintagel, as the first locality mentioned in the romance, has a special claim to attention: "It befell in the days of the noble Uther Pendragon, when he was King of all England, and so reigned, that there was a mighty and a noble Duke in Cornwalle that held long time wars against him; and the Duke was named the Duke of Tintagil." So run the opening lines, introducing us at once to the western territory and to the rocky stronghold indissolubly linked with Arthur's fame. Strange to say, however, the place is absolutely ignored in the later half of the history, despite the fact that Cornwall was the scene of some of the most important concluding events. Tintagel was apparently forgotten by the chroniclers after the story of Tristram was related, and the last mention of it as King Mark's Castle, where treachery was followed by bloodshed, where the

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allegiance of the knights began to decline, and where folly, wantonness, and shame served as omens of coming disaster and of the impending shock to the realm which Arthur had made. The history of Tintagel begins in a tale of shame, though King Uther's deceit of Igraine appears to have been regarded less as dishonour to himself than as a sign of his own and Merlin's strategy and venturesomeness.* Uther, having compassed the death of Gorlois, had no further difficulty in persuading Igraine to become his wife, and their son was Arthur, who at his birth was delivered to Sir Ector, "a lord of faire livelyhood," to be nourished as one of his own family. The death of Uther while his son was yet an infant left the succession in some doubt, and in order to prove Arthur's right to the crown the familiar device

* The following curious little item from R. Hunt's volume ought not to be lost sight of:—"I shall offer a conjecture, touching the name of Tintagel, which I will not say is right but only probable. *Tin* is the same as *Din*, *Dinas*, and *Dixeth*, deceit; so that Tindixel, turned for easier pronunciation to Tintagel, Dundagel, etc., signifies Castle of Deceit, which name might be aptly given to it from the famous deceit practised here by Uther Pendragon by the help of Merlin's enchantment." George Borrow says: "Tintagel does not mean the Castle of Guile, but the house in the gill of the hill, a term admirably descriptive" (*Wild Wales*, cap. cvii.).

was adopted of drawing a sword from a stone. The scene of the contest in which Arthur, now assumed by the chroniclers to be a goodly youth, and Sir Ector's son took part, is vaguely described as being "the churchyard of the greatest church in London"; and it is needless to say that only Arthur proved equal to the feat of pulling the sword from the marble and the steel anvil in which it stood. The letters of gold on the sword declared that "whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvile, is rightwise king borne of England," and Sir Ector and Sir Kay, his defeated son and Arthur's foster-brother, were the first to kneel to Arthur as their lord when they saw Excalibur in his hand. Before the lords and commons Arthur again proved his right and royalty at the feast of Pentecost, and with the help of Merlin he proceeded immediately to establish his kingdom, which, during Uther's illness and after his death, had stood "in great jeopardie."

Gorlois, the husband of Igraine, had been the possessor of two castles, Tintagel and Terabyl (or Damaliock), which may be judged to have been at no great distance from one another. Terabyl is untraceable, though it has been suggested that while Tintagel Castle was solely upon the peninsula (Barras Head) which juts into the sea,

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Terabyl was the castle upon the mainland. This theory is untenable. It is only in comparatively recent times, with the widening of the chasm between the peninsula and the mainland, that a division of any importance can be noticed; and it is safe to assume that there was never more than one castle at Tintagel. The rent in the rocks was spanned by a huge bridge, as the crenellated walls now reaching to the edge on either side and in a direct line with each other plainly attest. Terabyl, in which the Duke entrenched himself when Uther Pendragon brought his hosts against him, was evidently further inland than Tintagel, and the latter, distinctly avowed to be "ten miles hence," was selected as the refuge for Igraine. Uther, marching southward from Camelot, reached Terabyl first and laid siege to it; to reach Igraine at Tintagel he had still to ride some distance. "The Duke of Tintagil espied how the king rode from the siege of Terrabil, and, therefore, that night he issued out of the castle at a posterne"—(Terabyl was noted for its "many issues and pasternes out")—"for to have distressed the king's host. And so, through his own issue, the Duke himself was slain or ever the king came at the castle of Tintagil." Geoffrey of Monmouth calls Terabyl "castellum Dimilioc,"

but under this name it is no less a mystery. As it receives incidental mention only twice afterwards we may well be content to rank Terabyl among the cities of romance, the names of which alone existed. It may have been as unsubstantial as the enchanted cities created by mysterious maidens for their courteous and faithful lovers, which cities vanished in a night if vows were broken or false words uttered.

It is said in some of the romances that twice a year the Castle of Tintagel became invisible to the eyes of the common people. To-day it is only in imagination that we can perceive the real castle of Arthur, for whatever British fortress may ever have risen on these heights has long since vanished—crumbled away into dust which is as nothingness. Authentic history takes us back only to the time of the Norman Conquest, when Tintagel was entered in Domesday Book as Dunchine, or Chain Castle. It is the firm opinion of archæologists that the Romans entrenched themselves here and left signs of their occupation, and there are the strongest reasons for believing that Tintagel was a British place of defence before the Roman invasion. Nature had marked out the rocky height as a stronghold, and a race like the Britons could scarcely have failed

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to avail themselves of all the advantages it offered. But when we first read of Tintagel Castle apart from the romances we find it in the occupation of English princes, notably of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, otherwise known as the King of the Romans, who in 1245 gave noble entertainment to his nephew, Prince of Wales, then carrying on a desperate war for freedom against the English king. The use of Tintagel as a prison from which escape was almost impossible was recognised from early times until the reign of Elizabeth, at which era it began to fall into decay; and it was within the loneliest and most exposed portion of the island that John Northampton, Lord Mayor of London, who had abused his office, was immured for life by order of Richard II. A sculptured moorstone, now moss-covered and illegible, commonly called the altar-stone of King Arthur's Chapel, is believed in reality to be a monument of John Northampton's own carving, wrought to pass away the dreary days in his dungeon, and now marking the place of his tomb. What is known as King Arthur's Chapel is a spacious chamber fifty-four feet long and twelve feet wide, the outline of which is barely traceable. It is supposed to have been dedicated to Saint Uliane.

In Leland's time Tintagel Castle was "sore

wether-beten an yn ruine," and whether it was ever the stronghold of Arthur history does not determine. The name was formerly Dundagil, meaning "the impregnable fortress," and Geoffrey of Monmouth did not exaggerate when he wrote of it: "It is situated upon the sea, and on every side surrounded by it, and there is but one entrance into it, and that through a straight rock, which three men shall be able to defend against the whole of the kingdom." Leland, less interested in the matter, testified that "the castelle hath bene a marvelous strong and notable fortres, and a large thinge. . . . Without the isle rennith alonly a gate-house, a walle, and a fals braye dyged and walled. In this isle remayne old walles, and in the est part of the same, the ground beyng lower, remaynith a walle embateled, and men abyve saw thereyn a postern dore of yren." The chronicler and antiquary Carew supplies further evidence of the strength of the structure. "The cymment," he says, "wherewith the stones were laid, resisteth the fretting furie of the weather better than the stones themselves," a fact which is strongly commented on also by Norden, who thought that "neither time nor force of hands could sever one from the other." "Half the buildings," continues Carew, "were raised

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on the continent (the mainland) and the other halfe on an island, continued together by a draw-bridge, but now divorced by the downfalne steepe cliffes on the further side.” There is a consensus of opinion as to this drawbridge, Camden and other trustworthy historians all confirming the report as to its existence, and this further proves that there were not two castles at Tintagel.* The gigantic impression of a foot is pointed out to credulous pilgrims; it is the print left by King Arthur’s foot when he strode across the chasm—backwards. This is as much to be relied upon as the fact that the basins worn by the winds and waves in the rocks were King Arthur’s cups and saucers, and that a dizzy dip of the heights over the sea constituted his chair. It is sur-

* It is difficult to understand how a writer like the late Mrs. Craik could ever have fallen into this error. In her *Unsentimental Journey through Cornwall* she makes every effort to prove that the building on the mainland was the castle of Terabyl, and she insists that there were (and are) two castles at Tintagel. “One sits in the sea, and the other is upon the opposite heights of the mainland, with communication by a narrow causeway. This seems to confirm the legend, how Igraine’s husband shut himself and his wife in two castles, he being slain in the one, and she married to the victorious king Uther in the other.” It is obvious that the writer of these lines was unacquainted with Malory.



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle

KING ARTHUR'S CASTLE, TINTAGEL

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prising that the immense and awe-inspiring caverns have escaped the fate of being called King Arthur's drinking-bowls. Yet all these conceits have their value as proof of the deep-rooted belief in the king's might as a monarch and his stupendous stature as a man. The hero is rapidly passing into the myth when such attributes are ascribed to him.

Tintagel must have been even more impressive a scene a few centuries ago than it is to-day, despite its wild sublimity in ruin. One more witness of old time may be called forth to give his evidence of what it was before the walls had been so buffeted and brought so low.

"A statelye and impregnable seate," is Norden's testimony, "now rent and rugged by force of time and tempests; her ruines testifye her pristine worth, the view whereof, and due observation of her situation, shape, and condition in all partes, may move commiseration that such a statelye pile should perish for want of honourable presence. Nature hath fortified, and art dyd once beautifie it, in such sorte as it leaveth unto this age wonder and imitation." Tintagel is to be visited rather than described, though our most luxuriant poets have painted it with lavish richness of words, and artists have depicted some of

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its natural beauties in the most radiant of colours. From many a rocky verge can be seen the dark remnants of Arthur's fortress, inaccessible on all sides but one; from the deep base the ocean spreads out without bound, surging and boiling and casting up steam-like fountains of hissing foam. Only a few arches and rude flights of steps, surmounted by a frail-looking wooden door, now remain, with some fallen walls which imperfectly outline the shape of what were once spacious royal chambers. On a carpet of turf wander the small mountain sheep, and pick their way about the narrow precipitous paths which wind around the jagged sides of the cliffs. The fortifications are in ruin, and the battlemented walls which encompassed the massive steeps are now nothing but disconnected strips over which the curious traveller looks into the angry waters grinding and regurgitating far below. The noble bridge which once stretched across the yawning chasm dividing the two promontories must alone be imagined, though its beginnings on each side may be traced by the line of low stone arches reaching, and stopping abruptly at, the edge. The hills "that first see bared the morning's breast," the heights "the sun last yearns to from the west," as Swinburne has sung, are

eternal, but Arthur's castle has gone, and Tintagel, "half in sea and high on land, a crown of towers," is even called by the dwellers no more by its old inspiring name.

The very mention of Cornish seas has an alluring sound, and one already feels in the realm of romance when he descends in the mellow light of an afternoon in late summer that smallest of villages perched upon a rock overlooking the bluest of seas with its perpetual fringe of powdery foam. Here at the edge of the Atlantic is a most beguiling stretch of water, filling innumerable bays—water so clear and calm and deep-hued far away that it is hard to realise that it makes a cruel and treacherous sea in which only on the gentlest of days dare a swimmer plunge and feel his way among the underlying rocks, or upon the roaring waves of which dare a hardy sailor venture his boat. In storm this sea is terrible. The waves upheave themselves like solid hillocks of water, black at the base, and hurl themselves with appalling force against the huge rocks, which have already been worn and broken by them into a thousand fantastic shapes. Here and there the propelling force of the incoming tide, working like a gigantic engine, sends with torrent-force along narrow open passages a seething stream

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which beats its way upward and dashes headlong over the barriers of wood and stone; and the great smoke-coloured waves beyond rear themselves heavily, topple, and crash down into the abyss with thunderous roaring. On they come, nearer and nearer, louder and louder, those hard, rising, climbing, dissolving bodies of incalculable strength, dashing themselves furiously over every obstacle, sweeping with a hiss across the tracts of sand, and obliterating the tall rocks which can be toilsomely climbed when the waters retreat. Beneath this raging, battering sea lies a fabled domain with all its fair cities and towers, and every watcher of those stupendous, merciless billows can realise their potentiality to tear away the land and drag it into the unseen deeps. Storm at Tintagel or Trebarwith is both revelation and conviction: it is a manifestation of remorselessness, a suggestion of irreparable ruin, desolation, and loss. Easy indeed is it to imagine that the treacherous and cruel waves driving rapaciously landward have already had their victory and are savagely seeking to extend their conquest, and that hereabout lie "the sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyonesse."

No one has described this wildly beautiful sea with greater charm and realism than Swinburne,

who has watched it in all moods, seen it in the blueness of calm, seen it strive and shiver "like spread wings of angels blown by the sun's breath," seen it when the 'glad exhilarated swimmer feels

"The sharp sweet minute's kiss

Given of the wave's lip, for a breath's space curled
And pure as at the daytime of the world,"

—seen it again when the east wind made the water thrill, and the soft light went out of all its face, and the green hardened into iron blue. A walk from Camelford to Tintagel, passing Trebarwith, and on from Tintagel to Boscastle, passing Bossiney and many a smaller cove on the way, reveals the most wonderful and alluring of all changeful sea-pictures, and displays most vividly the marvel and magic of the rugged coast. The towering rocks have been wrought by time and carved by wind and wave into grotesque images, broken at the base into sunless caves, worn at the heights into sharp and gleaming pinnacles, fretted and cut, rounded and cracked, sundered and cast down, the massive blocks made veritably the sport of the elements, so that the beholder may easily believe himself in the realm of enchantment. All the sounding shores of Bude and Boss are legend-haunted. The mariner

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hears the chime and toll of the lost bells of Botreux when he comes within sight of the "silent tower," which stands white and grim upon the headland. The wail of lured voyagers and the despairing lament of the smugglers who brought them with false lights to their doom are listened to in awe on stormy nights, and there are visions of good ships that went down among the rocks in the tragic desperate days of which so many ghastly tales are told. The last of the Cornish wreckers, for whom, when he lay dying, a ship with red sails came in a tremendous sea and bore him shrieking away, looms as an apparition on the darkest nights, and the cries of tormented spirits mingle with the blast. Merlin, with flowing beard, is said to pace the shore, and Arthur and his knights to revisit the scenes of their exploits. The spirit of the king hovers about sea and land in the form of the almost sacred chough, revered and preserved by the inhabitants that they may not unwittingly injure their hero. Further north at Bude Haven the long Atlantic breakers roll, and perhaps there is no more imposing spectacle than the coil of waves coming in upon the far-extending and rock-strewn sands. The undulations, miles long, seem to rise and curl far-out at sea at short regular distances from each



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle]

THE ELEPHANT ROCK, BOSSINEY COVE

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other, and mass upon mass they break with thunder-sound and cataract upon the shore. The most brilliant of sunsets glow in the perfect summer weather when day dies slowly over these "far-rolling, westward-smiling seas," and they leave the night still radiant. The whole land is sweet and bright with flowers: on one side lies the glittering surf lacing itself in white foam about the boulders, and on the other side rises the circle of hills topped by the massy brown summits of Row Tor and Brown Willy. Sometimes the deserted quarries give a spectral look to the landscape, and when the rain spatters and darkens the piles of rough slate the aspect is weird and gloomy indeed. But given a day of sunshine when the sea is a sparkling emerald or the deepest of blues, when the sky is clear or only softened with diaphanous rings of cirrus-cloud, when the moss glistens on the rocks and the expanse of meadowland is a vivid carpet of green, when the winding hilly lanes flanked by tall hedges are white and shadowless, and the little tinkling runlets are silver gleams, and then this tract of Arthur's Cornwall is almost the land of faerie which poets have sung.

What more fitting than that the grave of Tristram and Iseult should have been at Tintagel,

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where the sea they loved came with its strong
and awful tides, and now

“Sweeps above their coffined bones
In the wrecked chancel by the shivered shrine”?

The deep sea guards them and engirds them, and no man shall say where the lovers lie in their last sleep. King Mark buried the two in one grave, and planted over it a rose-bush and vine, the branches of which so intermingled that they became inseparable. Arnold, Swinburne, and Tennyson have best told the whole story in our language in modern times. But it is no slight task to trace the literary history and development of the beautiful theme. A German *minnesänger* of the twelfth century, Gotfrit of Strasburg, is the first to whom the romance is ascribed, though Scott and others have claimed for Thomas of Ercildoune (Thomas the Rhymer) the best poetic version, only one copy of which is extant. A thirteenth-century manuscript, which contains a French metrical version of the romance, has been noted by Lockhart as citing the authority of Thomas the Rhymer for the story of Tristram and Iseult; but Thomas's version was totally different from the prose romances. Great efforts have been made at one time and another to prove the story to be of English, French, and German

origin, but at least this much is assured—the principal scenes are English, and the leading events in the history of Tristram, the nephew of King Mark of Cornwall, occur at Tintagel. He journeyed to Ireland to bring back the daughter of the queen of that country, and he journeyed to Brittany to bring back his own wife, that Iseult of the White Hand who failed to win his love. His adventures as a Knight of the Round Table took him, as was usual, over much territory and to foreign lands; but it is to Cornwall that the interest always returns, and in which it is concentrated. Among the “wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays” of Tintagel, and within the “towers washed round with rolling foam,” the knight and the damsel wedded to King Mark, who had saved him from torture and death, lived their lives of forbidden love. The Minstrel-knight suited his voice to the mellow chords of his harp, and wandered about the woods and beside the sea in the May-time of his happiness with Iseult the Queen. And when the knight had wedded another Iseult, it was at Tintagel that Mark’s wife, with her passionate thoughts, her sorrow, and her despair, sat alone in a casement and heard the night speak and thunder on the sea “ravening aloud for ruin of lives.” Such words

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can be easily comprehended by those who have seen Tintagel in storm, the wind roaring, the seas flashing white, a blinding mist of rain between the heavy sky and the weltering waves. The rage of the elements, the vehemence of the warring tide, the dash and the recoil at the castle-base, have only their parallel in the human passion which was too strong for life itself to withstand, when deserted Iseult saw before her the corpse of her lover. Tristram, ill-fated from birth, was doomed to die by treachery. He was wounded, and learnt that he could only be healed by the magic art of the woman he loved, of her who had cured him before. He sent for Iseult to cross the sea in order to save him, and commanded the messenger to hoist a white sail if she consented and was on her way. The white sail was hoisted, but the other Iseult, the faithful but neglected wife, could not resist saying what jealousy prompted—that the sail was black. Sir Tristram immediately expired. Malory's romance declares that the knight met his death at the hands of King Mark, who slew him "as he sat harping afore his lady La Beale Isoud, with a trenchant glaive, for whose death was much bewailing of every knight that ever were in King Arthur's days."

The literary history and the variations of the

extremely ancient and supremely sorrowful story can only be adequately treated in such a volume as that of M. Losseth, who has given an account of twenty-four manuscripts containing Tristram's history, of six works in the French National Library, of Malory's version, and of one Italian, two Danish, and one German translation or original rendering. Some have attributed the authorship to Cormac of Ireland in the third century; others believe the Welsh bards first sang it; the French claimed it for their *trouvères*, but have now admitted its British origin. Yet it is remarkable how French, Cornish, and Irish histories intermingle in the romance, and how the magic element occasionally enters, spoiling it as history but enriching it as a legend. The story is one of such pathos that the predominating influence of the Celt in suggesting and shaping it must instantly be recognised. But so many have worked on the theme, early and late—none perhaps with such superb effect as Wagner—that the primitive conception is apt to be forgotten or ignored; it has been overlaid with details gathered from many lands, and embellished by the poetic fancies of many races. The story has become European; Beroul, Christian of Troyes, Thomas of Brittany, Robert the northern monk,

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Eilhard of Oberge, Gottfrid and the other early Germans, the Provençal minstrels—all these have altered and added to the tale of the knight who slew the sea-monster, the Morhout, saved the Cornish maidens from shame and death, was wounded by a poisoned arrow, healed by Iseult the Beautiful, and both of whom, drinking of a magic love-potion intended for Iseult's destined husband, afterwards experienced all the joys and pangs of an unhallowed love which Dante himself could not refrain from celebrating and condoning. The story abounds in mystic symbolism, or, rather, that symbolism has been found in it; and the inevitable Sun-god myth has been perceived in its details.

Tintagel, a picture in the waters, is at its best when the sky becomes a rose above it, and the sun dipping into a golden bath leaves a track gleaming like pearl across the shoaling sea. The waves as they rise and fall make emerald and purple lines in moments of magic change, and their crests of foam sparkle jewel-like with a thousand instantaneous lights. Then "all the rippling green grows royal gold" as the sun, like a splendid bubble, floats on the water's edge. Round the pointed brown rocks are fringes of white foam ever widening and contracting; the

oncoming waters with an exultant bound sometimes spring high in fountains and then sink slowly and gently as if fairy spires were dissolving in thinnest powder. Again, with a roar and an access of strength, the waves return impetuously, raging and grinding, churned as by some mighty hidden wheel into yeasty foam. Vista-like the long bright track, now a deep red band, leads back to the inner chambers of the sun, and the sea draws the orb into its dark, mysterious depths. The waves lace themselves around the pinky-green islets, and the verdant headlands, succeeding each other in almost interminable series till the eye catches the gleam of the Lizard lights, begin to soften mistily away behind the twilight veil. A little ship, far off, skims over the sea-rim and disappears; a tiny cloud floats up like a loose silken sail, silvery white. The seagulls and the choughs flit about the broken arches of the castle, and shadows fall long and deep across the deep ravinous path leading inland from the precipitous heights.

At such time Tintagel is telling its own story, weaving its own romance; and words seem vain when those shattered columns, those fallen walls, that unbridged chasm, are there to make the tale. Of the after-history of the place what matters it?

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We would fain have the story end, as it began, with Arthur and Guinevere, King Mark, Mage Merlin, and Tristram and Iseult. Every roll of the breakers is a voice from the past, and every crumbling chamber a chapter in that history which only the true poet transcribes. Yet even while such thoughts are forcing themselves upon the mind of the beholder of a typical August sunset over Tintagel, the end of the day will be near. The arc of the sun blazes upon the sea-line, an edge of fiery carmine, and a fleecy train of cirrus-cloud crimsons with the last rays. Slowly and yet perceptibly the light dies away and leaves the heaving sea mystically dusk and the world full of shadows. Darkness looms over Tintagel. The overhanging crags look as if they might crack, break off, and thunder down into the open-mouthed sea below. The black chough wheels about the ruins—the spirit of Arthur, say the people, revisiting the scene of his glory. Arcturus, the star of Arthur, glistens in the blue sky right over the castle height, and Arthur's Harp shapes itself more dimly further east—for the constellations themselves were named after the puissant king. The tide is at its height and has flooded the little stony beach to which a steep path leads; the caves are full; on the horizon the



Photo: R. Welby, Boscastle

BARRAS HEAD, TINTAGEL

[To face p. 110]

night-clouds come up and shape themselves into fantastic forms of towers, and the real which are near, and the imagined which are far, scarce can be distinguished.

Lytton seems to have had Tintagel, or a very similar place in the north, in his mind when he described the arrival of the Cymrian King, pursued by the Saxons, at a beach of far resounding seas where wave-hollowed caves arched, and

“ Column and vault, and seaweed-dripping domes
Long vistas opening through the streets of dark,
Seem'd like a city's skeleton, the homes
Of giant races vanish'd.”

This tract of land around Tintagel is crowded with memorials and with relics about which superstition has cast its web. The caer-camp at Trenail Bury, and the huge stone monuments which lie embedded in the earth, take us back to British times. The pools, looking black and weird among the hills, all have their legends, and the wells commemorate a multitude of saints known only to Cornwall. Castle-an-Dinas looms majestically at a height of nearly eight hundred feet against the horizon : here was King Arthur's hunting ground, and the remains of the structure cresting the summit was his palace. The scenes of some of his hard-fought battles are the wide

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valleys closed in by the shadowy hills, and the crags dashed by the tumultuous sea. You may wander at will for miles in any direction still keeping in sight the sturdy granite church standing exposed on the highest bit of the coast; you will hear no sound but the whimpering cry of the gulls; and you will be free to reconstruct here in imagination the vanished realm of King Arthur, while the words of the old priest, Joseph Iscarus of Exeter, ring in your ears—

“ From this blest place immortal Arthur sprung
Whose wondrous deeds shall be for ever sung,
Sweet music to the ear, sweet honey to the tongue.
The only prince that hears the just applause,
Greatest that e’er shall be, and best that ever was.”

CHAPTER V

OF CAERLEON-UPON-USK

“Caerleon, now step in with stately style,
No feeble phrase may serve to set thee forth;
Thy famous town was spoke of many a myle,
Thou hast been great, though now but little worth:
Thy noble bounds hath reacht beyond them all,
In thee hath been King Arthur’s golden hall,
In thee the wise and worthies did repose.”—*Old Poet.*

“Slow sets the summer sun,
Slow fall the mists, and, closing, droop the flowers,
Faint in the gloaming dies the vesper bell,
And dreamland sleeps round golden Carduel.”—*Lytton.*

“When Arthur first in court began,
And was approvèd King,
By force of armes great victoreys wanne,
And conquest home did bring.”—*Percy Reliques.*

“OLD Caerleon-upon-Usk” is the enchanted capital of the kingdom called Romance. Its domes of fretted gold, its countless pinnacles, its seventy churches, its gorgeous palace, and its giant tower—

“From whose high crest, they say,
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea,”

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by the wonder-working art of poets and old-time chroniclers have a reality for us to-day, though they may never have been visible. But the city of the Hero-King is a city seen through a veil. The glittering spires show through the mists of time; in a half-shadow we discern the lofty turrets, and mark the lanceolate windows with their shining diamond-panes; a dreamy brightness reveals the gilded roofs and the "magic casements" where Guinevere and her maidens stood and watched the tourneying knights, and glanced their loves and hopes upon the combatants. The name of Arthur conjures up the scene, and fancy releases the city from its spell of slumber and ruin and fashions it again in splendour. It is said that this city of Legions was once the rival of Rome in grandeur. When the all-conquering king had subdued thirty kingdoms, he could find no more suitable place than Caerleon for holding a magnificent court to place the crown upon his head, and to invite the kings and dukes under his subjection to the ceremony. When he had communicated his designs to the familiar friends, he pitched upon Caerleon as a proper place for his purpose; for, besides its great wealth above the other cities, its situation was most pleasant and fit for so great a solemnity. For on one side it

was washed by that noble river (the Usk), so that the kings and princes from the countries beyond the seas might have the convenience of sailing up to it. On the other side was the beauty of meadows and groves, and the magnificence of the royal palaces. Besides, there was a college of two hundred philosophers, who, being learned in astronomy and the other arts, were diligent in observing the courses of the arts, and gave King Arthur the predictions of the events that would happen at that time. So runs Geoffrey's chronicle, and he reports that at the festival there were present numerous kings, princes, prelates, and consuls, all named; and no prince of any consideration on this side Spain forbore attending. The ceremony of the coronation, as described by Geoffrey, was a stupendous event. The archbishops, headed by Dubritius, were conducted to the royal palace to place the crown upon the monarch's head. Arthur was invested with his imperial habiliments, and conducted in great pomp to the Metropolitan Church, supported by the bishops and four kings, who bore golden swords before him. The queen, "dressed out in her richest ornaments," and attended by bishops and four queens, bearing before her four white doves, joined the procession; and the people of Caerleon

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in their tens of thousands "made all imaginable demonstrations of joy." Then transporting music was played, both in the churches and the streets all day, and was so beautiful that the knights knew not which of the many orchestras to prefer. After the service the king and queen retired to their separate palaces, "for the Britons still observed the ancient custom of Troy, by which men and women used to celebrate their festivals apart." One thousand young noblemen, clothed in ermine, served the banquet at the king's table; and in the queen's palace innumerable servitors, dressed with a variety of ornaments, performed their offices. The knights, in best apparel, were in full attendance, and the ladies, celebrated for their wit, encouraged them in their tourneys. No man, says Geoffrey, was worthy of a woman's love until he had given proof of his valour in three separate battles; "thus was the valour of the men an encouragement for the women's chastity, and the love of the women a spur to the soldiers' bravery." The victors in the jousts at Caerleon that day were rewarded by Arthur in person, and the capital was a blaze of splendour and a scene of unequalled exploits.*

* Silchester, originally a Celtic fortress, and a city of the size of London, is also reported to have been the scene of

We get further pictures of Caerleon from other of the early historians. Giraldus Cambriensis recorded in the twelfth century that at Caerleon might be seen many vestiges of its former glory, "immense palaces ornamented with gilded roofs, in imitation of Roman magnificence, a tower of prodigious size, and relics of temples." Three centuries before Cæsar's invasion, Belin Mawr laid the city's foundations; and in the sixth century—

"Cymri's dragon, from the Roman's hold,

Spread with calm wing o'er Carduel's domes of gold."

In the "Mabinogion" we also get a casual glimpse of King Arthur's royal state at Caerleon: "Arthur was accustomed to hold his court at

Arthur's coronation at the age of fifteen by Dubritius. Modern excavations have proved the importance of the city as a great centre of life and industry, in Roman and British times, with its Forum, Basilica, and rows of shops and houses; and if the *Calleva Atrebatum* were really Arthur's crowning place, its fitness and worth for so imposing an event cannot be disputed. Although Silchester is not directly referred to in the Romances, Arthur's Hampshire connections are numerous. They centre in Winchester, where his predecessor and foster-father, Ambrosius Aurelianus, died in the year 508. It was at Silchester also that the chief men of the provinces met after Uther Pendragon's death and petitioned Dubritius, Archbishop of Caerleon, to consecrate Arthur the successor to the dead king.

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Caerleon-upon-Usk. And there he held it seven Easters and five Christmases. And once upon a time he held his court there at Whitsuntide. For Caerleon was the place most easy of access in his dominions, both by sea and land. And there were assembled nine crowned kings, who were his tributaries, and likewise earls and barons. For they were his invited guests at all the high festivals, unless they were prevented by any great hindrance. And when he was at Caerleon holding his court, thirteen churches were set apart for mass." But the scene at the coronation of Arthur was never excelled; and if Geoffrey of Monmouth could be believed, such a noble assembly, such a display of magnificence, such prodigality of sport and hospitality were never before or afterward seen in Britain; and the historian adds that at that time King Arthur's country had arrived at "such a pitch of grandeur, that in abundance of riches, luxury, ornaments, and politeness of inhabitants it far surpassed all other countries."

But what is Caerleon now? Late on an August afternoon, when the sky was stricken with the first shadowy pallor of evening, a white, sandy, deserted lane led me past a few scattered houses and a small church to the riverside. The tide was

out and the waters had shrunk almost into silence. An old tower, thickly overgrown with trailing weeds, stands on the bank, and tells of other times. The fields stretching away from the right bank of the Usk are irregularly divided by the remnant of an old Roman wall, rising about twelve feet, and supposed to have been originally four miles long, connecting Caerleon with the outposts. Antiquaries differ in opinion as to whence the stone was obtained; those marvel-working Romans who came over with Julius Frontinus in the first century, and made Caerleon the head-quarters of the second Augustan Legion, left the secret buried in the monument they raised. The wall passes by, and beyond, the Priory and the Round Table Field, where a deep indentation probably marks the site of a Roman amphitheatre. This supposition derives circumstantial confirmation from the fact that a contiguous field has borne from time out of record the name of the Bearhouse Field—the site of the house in which wild beasts were kept for gladiatorial contests. But legend floats about the scene and fantastically shapes itself into a marvellous tale, that here King Arthur with his knights sits entranced in a subterranean chamber, and there will remain until Britain in her hour of peril calls him forth to new

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and greater conquests. The Welsh bards have sung how—

“ He first ordained the circled board ;
The knights whose martial deeds far-famed that Table
Round,
Which truest in their loves, which most in arms renowned,
The laws which long upheld that Order, they report :
The Pentecosts prepar'd at Caerleon in her Court,
That Table's ancient seat.”

While we wander about the green hillocks which compose that mysterious circle our minds can feel the inspiration of the scene and sport with the phantoms of the unreal world. It is on such occasions that we feel the touch of other times and seem to hear the echo of voices stilled. The flame of romance kindles a thousand images ; half the present fades away, and in its place appears what has vanished or has never been. The long procession of the dead troops by, and the tale of bygone days is recalled. Here, once, were the sounds of tumult ; the king's pavilion was set, and the tourney was “let cry.” Then were heard the clatter of the steeds, the rush to arms, the clang of sword and spear, the shattering of hauberk and shield ; then through the streets resounded the trumpet-call to arms and the proclamation of the king ; then gathered and dispersed the noble order of knights and the flower

of chivalry, setting forth upon noble quests or returning to relate their deeds to Arthur and to lay their spoils at the feet of Guinevere. Along these lanes rode Sir Lancelot and Sir Galahad, Sir Gawain, and Sir Kaye. Here came kings from north, south, and west to do homage to Arthur. Here,

“ Among the myriad-room’d
And many-corridor’d perplexities
Of Arthur’s palace,”

the drama of pain and shame was acted by the queen and Arthur’s greatest knight, a man “not after Arthur’s heart.” Here, where the bee hums and the moth alights, were knightly jousts and stubborn contests. Steel grappled with steel, and the hard ground trembled under the shock of mounted warriors. Here, where the grass grows long and the daisy and primrose brighten out among the green, were mailed men and mirthful maidens; here they feasted and sang and dedicated their days to love and chivalry. But the wind roves over the open plain; and scarcely a stone, a tottering arch, or a fallen tower, has escaped the iconoclasm of time’s remorseless hand. The massive walls which defied the siege of the all-conquering Roman have been thrown down, and the regal palaces which never

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yielded to the pagan have sunk and disappeared in the dust. Their very foundations cannot be traced. But beneath the ruins sleeps romance, and in the pervading silence is closed the last song of ancient chivalry. The dust of the heroes is scattered, and

“The attributes of those high days
Now only live in minstrel-lays.”

Everything is past but the names of men and places—names that we have and ideals that we make. A ford with Arthur's name, a stone associated with his deeds, a city where his temples were reared! Tranquilly flows the river and washes the unfrequented banks; and Caerleon-upon-Usk, like a wave that has been spent and dies upon the shore, has ebbed into the quietude of tideless time and has been lost. Yet, to him who goes with open mind and simple faith, Caerleon is even now a wonderland, and fragments of its marvellous story are scattered on the roadside, in the undulating meadows, and along the banks of the wide brown river. Everywhere we find remnants of a remarkable past; and though the city has dwindled to a hamlet and is sequestered from the busy toiling world, it seems like the city of fable which slept until the promised prince came and released it from the fetters of enchantment. So may Caerleon one day be awakened.

The healing sun-god, Belenus (from whose name our modern Billingsgate is derived), was the Celtic Apollo, and to him is ascribed the foundation of Caerleon. Others, with better reason, ascribe it to Lleon, an ancient British king. The Romans, about the year 70 A.D., made it one of their chief stations in Britannia Secunda, and the city in their time is reputed to have been nine miles in area. Akeman Street went from it to Cirencester, and the maritime Julian Way passed through it from Bath to Neath, while the mountain Julian Way connected it with Abergavenny. Fragments of a Roman fortress 12 feet thick and 1,800 yards in circuit have been found, and the Roman amphitheatre, 16 feet high and 222 feet by 192 feet in extent, is popularly known as the festival scene of King Arthur and his knights. Some of the Roman bricks and tiles are to be found in the modern structures, and part of the old Roman wall twelve feet high is still visible. In the days of Hadrian the best part of the city was Caerleon *ultra pontem*—that part lying beyond the wooden movable bridge, which is now replaced by one of stone.* The local museum is

* Of this wooden bridge G. W. Manby in his *Guide* (published 1802) gives an illustration, and says: "As numerous coins have been found where the piles of the bridge are now placed, there is no doubt of its being the

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crowded with memorials of antiquity—tesselated pavements, Roman stones and inscriptions, baths, altars, sculpture, Roman lamps (found in a road cutting), glass vessels, bronze ornaments, harness buckles, keys, coins, and stone facings of the rooms in the Castle Villa. Most curious and valuable of all, perhaps, is a boundary stone showing that the sea-walls were the work of the third-century Romans and made by their soldiery. But

original pass. To a person unaccustomed to such a bridge, the rattling noise whenever any weight is going over naturally occasions some apprehensions. . . . The accounts of the tide rising so high as to cover the bridge are erroneous; it never has been known yet; but that assertion has given rise to the idea of the bridge being purposely loose to prevent its being carried away in such cases. The amazing floods to which the river is subject would render it not surprising if accidents did happen." Tennyson, who obtained from the *genius loci* both inspiration and enlightenment, refers in *Geraint and Enid* to the rapidity of the turn of the tidal waters of the Usk :—

" Scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before the time to fall seaward again,
Pauses."

Modern Caerleon, however, with its commonplace railway station, its porters shouting "Car—lion," its new bridge, its spoilt Norman church, and its street of small dwelling-houses, is likely at first to disappoint the pilgrim, who only by searching and waiting can hope to find the links with the city's historic past.

the sea has receded from Caerleon and is now quite two miles away, and Newport has arisen where once the ships of Caerleon sailed. All the Roman temples which King Arthur found in the city he is said to have converted into Christian churches, St. Dubric, the most famous of the ecclesiastics of antiquity, being appointed the archbishop. On the other hand, the archbishopric is said to date from 182, and to have lasted until 521. But the remarkable and significant fact is that while relics in abundance of the early Romans can be found, nothing has been preserved of the later British or Saxon times, and not a trace can be discovered of the surpassing glory of the Arthurian capital. Tradition avers that for four hundred years before the Christian era Caerleon was a royal residence and the burial place of British kings; but tradition dispenses with proofs.

King Arthur's ninth great battle against the Saxons took place at Caerleon, and he had previously encountered them at the most celebrated of the city's outposts, Caerwent. The latter place has a history little inferior to that of Caerleon itself, and has strong claims to consideration both as a Roman settlement and as a reputed Arthurian stronghold. It is uninviting in aspect to-day, but the fragments of stately piles and the innumer-

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able coins and medals that have been unearthed attest its former consequence. Caerwent is situated on the Via Julia, or military road, and Leland bore witness to the many evidences of its ancient importance, with its massive walls and gates. It is even affirmed that Caerwent was originally the capital of the Silures, but that afterwards it was a "dependence" on Caerleon, with which it communicated by a subterranean passage. The entrance to that passage was from a lane which still retains the name of Arthur.

Some fifty years ago a stranger went to Caerleon, and without giving his name or stating his errand, took up his abode at the Hanbury Arms, one of the oldest hostelrys in the kingdom. The Hanbury Arms is a white, quaintly-built house, facing the Usk, and originally stood at a point in the road commanding three approaches to the city. But the change of time has given a new entrance to Caerleon, and travellers will now find the Hanbury Arms on the remote side. Its low-browed windows, with the stone mullions of unusual thickness, and the square hooded drip-stones above, indicate that the house dates from the fourteenth or fifteenth century. To this place the stranger made his way, his advent being almost unnoticed and his purpose unknown. A local chronicler wrote: "Quiet and unobtrusive to

a degree, he soon attracted attention from his very reserved and seclusive habits. Day after day passed, and his figure was seldom seen. Frequently he would leave the house early in the morning, and go no one knew whither, and on his return retire to his room until next morning. It was soon recognised that the stranger was fond of long walks, and there was not a hill in the neighbourhood up whose sides he did not climb. For a time no companion or friend seemed to notice him, but occasionally a letter arriving at the post office was delivered to him. At first the name attracted no attention, but at length ' Alfred Tennyson,' inscribed on successive missives, seemed to have a special interest for the local postmaster. He repeated the name until its familiarity led him to suspect that the stranger was no other than the Poet Laureate, and this ultimately proved correct. On the fact becoming generally known that Tennyson was staying at Caerleon, visitors frequently called upon him, but he endeavoured to maintain his seclusion to the last. . . In 1859 the result of Tennyson's sojourn at ' Caerwysg ' was seen, when he produced to the world his *Idylls of the King*. Some few of the inhabitants still remember the poet." Tennyson's half-dozen allusions to Caerleon are slight, but they do not lack distinctness; the most striking

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are those semi-descriptive references in *Geraint and Enid*, and in *Balin and Balan*, neither of which could have been so written had not the poet visited the spot.

The Caerleon of fancy, not of reality, is described at much greater length and with much higher charm by Lytton. If Tennyson was content with a sweeping reference to the palace and its chambers, Lytton could only be satisfied with a detailed account of the High Council Hall in which was set the king's ivory throne, and around which gathered "the Deathless Twelve of the Heroic King," the Knights of the Round Table. He tells how the dragon of the Cymri "spread with calm wing o'er Carduel's domes of gold," and how the city lay in a vale, sheltered by the dark forests which mantled the environing hills, while his picture of the daily customs of the people of the city was revealed in the words:—

"Some plied in lusty race the glist'ning oar;
Some noiseless snared the silver-scaléd prey;
Some wreathed the dance along the level shore;
And each was happy in his chosen way."

But this was purely the city of vision. The faint light which history throws upon the dark period of the British occupation shows us that Caerleon was continually given over to warfare of the wildest character. It is associated also in the

Fabliaux with the darkest event in Arthur's personal history—an event in which Mordred eventually acted as Nemesis.

Were all the romances written which have Caerleon as their background of scenery, the long stories of the ill-fated brethren Balin and Balan, of Geraint and Enid, of many a knightly quest and adventure, and of many a great undertaking by the "fair beginners of a nobler time," would have to be related anew. The half-historic, half-fabulous histories of Dubritius the archbishop, of Taliesin the chief of bards, of Talhairan, the father of poetry—all men of Caerleon—would likewise have to be recounted, but the complete narratives must be sought in the chronicles, the triads, and the "Mabinogion." Yet some of the dust under which lies the golden-domed city, and some of the ruins beneath which sleeps slain romance, mingle with the dust and ruins of history; and a little of that history may be deciphered still in the Isca Silurum of the Romans, where Caractacus held his court, where the Præter deposited the eagles, where justice was dealt out in the name of Cæsar, where Saxons and Britons met in one of their last deadly struggles, and where the dragon of the Cymry ultimately prevailed, and Arthur Pendragon rose and had his name set "high on all the hills and in the signs of heaven."

CHAPTER VI

OF THE ROUND TABLE AND KING ARTHUR'S BATTLES

“ Ah, Minstrels ! when the Table Round
Arose, with all its warriors crown'd,
There was a theme for bards to sound
In triumph to their string ! ”—*Scott*.

“ A Knight of Arthur, working out his will
To cleanse the world. ”—*Tennyson*.

“ Full fifteen years, and more, were sped ;
Each brought new wreaths to Arthur's head.
Twelve bloody fields, with glory fought,
The Saxons to subjection brought ;
Rython, the mighty giant slain
By his good brand, relieved Bretagne :
The Pictish Gillamore in fight,
And Roman Lucius, own'd his might ;
And wide were through the world renown'd
The glories of his Table Round. ”—*Scott*.

LOVERS of the Arthurian legend might feel a sense of disappointment if they were told that King Arthur never founded a Round Table, and that all tradition on that subject was belied. But the closest students of the ancient story are com-

pelled to come to the conclusion that, even granting King Arthur "made a realm and reign'd," his Round Table existed only in the imagination of later chroniclers and the weavers of the romances. The evidence in favour of the Round Table is of no substantial character, despite the veritable relic which exists at Winchester and is proudly pointed to as the original and genuine article. When Geoffrey of Monmouth pieced together the fragments of history, the fables, and the traditions of the last of the British heroes, and produced that wonderful narrative which has served as a basis upon which to rear the elaborate and complicated structure called by Malory the "noble hystorye of King Arthur," he found nothing whatever in those sources of information either of the Round Table or of the Holy Grail. It was in 1155, when the "flower of Kings" had five centuries of dust upon his tomb, that Wace in the *Brut* gave the first intimation of the existence of the idea.—"Fist Artus la ronde table, dont Breton dient mainte fable;" from which we are led to infer that the tradition was of Breton origin. Others have assumed that the story of the Round Table established by King Arthur for the accommodation of twelve favourite knights who met in perfect equality was but a variation

of that told of Charlemagne and his peers, though the foremost scholars now assure us that the two ideas were separate and distinct. The outstanding fact remains, however, that the earliest histories of Arthur are silent on the subject which is so impressive and memorable a feature of the later histories. Whence the idea was derived, and how it came to be imported into this narration, none can tell; but of its fitness of character there is no question. It is in thorough keeping with the Arthurian story, supplies an appropriate illustration of his character and methods, and enforces the leading doctrine of knightly fellowship and the unity of the chivalrous band whose primary object was "deeds of worship."

It is absolutely impossible to reconcile the many conflicting accounts of how King Arthur's Round Table was obtained. One report is that it was made by Merlin for Uther Pendragon; that Uther gave it to King Leodegraunce of Cameliard; and that Leodegraunce gave it as a wedding gift to Arthur when he married his daughter, Guinevere. Malory confirmed this in his *Book of the Round Table and the Three Quests*, when he put these words into the mouth of the king—"I love Guinevere, the King's daughter, Leodegraunce, of the land of Cameliard, which holdeth in his house

the Table Round, that ye told he had of my father, Uther." And Leodegraunce, when he heard of the projected marriage, said: "He hath lands enough, he needeth none; but I shall send him a gift that shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round, the which Uther Pendragon gave me; and, when it is full complete, there is a hundred knights and fifty; and as for a hundred good knights, I have myself, but I lack fifty, for so many have been slain in my days." King Arthur received the Table Round and the hundred knights, "which," he said, "please me more than right great wishes."

In the *Book of Sir Galahad* we find that King Arthur "would wit how many had taken the quest of the Sancgreal, and to account them he prayed them all. Then found they by tale an hundred and fifty, and all were knights of the Round Table." But obviously this Round Table which seated a hundred and fifty knights and left a space for the Holy Grail, was not the special Round Table for King Arthur and the favoured twelve knights of his selection; though it may have been the Round Table which in the *Book of Sir Percivale* we are told Merlin made "in token of the roundness of the world: for by the Round

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Table is the world signified by right. For all the world, Christian and heathen, resort unto the Round Table, and when they are chosen to be of the fellowship of the Round Table, they think them more blessed, and more in worship, than if they had gotten half the world." So said the Queen of the Waste Lands to Sir Percivale. Yet in regard to this great institution there exists the bolder idea of its astronomical derivation, and considering to what extent astrology has entered into the Arthurian story the theory that the Round Table was suggested by the movement round the Pole of the Great Bear—"the seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round"—must not be overlooked. Each age of chivalry has had some such institution, and the Round Table continued to exist in this country until the time of the Third Edward. Yet the actual era remains unverified

" When first the question rose
About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world."

Nor were the repeated efforts of English monarchs to keep alive the institution conspicuously successful. The original standard could not be maintained, and the tendency of these later times when the romances were being enriched and

elaborated, when Arthur and his knights were regarded as models, and when tournaments were held in imitation of the ancient jousts, was in reality a downward tendency. The ideal which men strove to realise did not correspond with the spirit of the former age. "People had become more worldly," writes Ten Brink, "and were generally anxious to protect the real interest of life from the unwarrantable interference of romantic aspirations. The spirit of chivalry no longer formed a fundamental element, but only an ornament of life—an ornament, indeed, which was made much of, and was looked upon with a sentiment partaking of enthusiasm. But now chivalry was no longer the simple outflow of a dominant idea, but rather the product of a pleasant self-conscious reflection. Minds ideally constituted strove to fill the traditional moulds and formulas with a really ethical substance, and by trying in their own way to transpose these ancient poems into action, developed a really tender and humane disposition. The majority of people rejoiced merely in the splendour, and in the festive, dignified existence that raised them above the commonplace and distinguished them from the vulgar crowd. But in every case there was the intermixture of an

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incongruous element." The lapse to Quixotism was inevitable, and with the lashings of the follies of the indiscriminating imitator of the knights of chivalry, the old custom passed away in derision. Cervantes did well and did evil by his destructive satire: in cutting away the parasite, the false and foolish chivalry which had fastened itself upon the wise and the true, he cut also to the roots of the goodly tree which deserved to fall more nobly, if fall it must. Renan reminds us that it was not Arthur the King who has been adopted by all peoples, but Arthur who charmed the world as the head of an order of equality in which all sat at the same table, and in which a man's worth depended upon his valour and his natural gifts. The fate of an unknown peninsula mattered nothing to the world—"what enchanted it was the ideal court presided over by Guinevere, where around the monarchical unity the flower of heroes was gathered together, where ladies, as chaste as they were beautiful, loved according to the laws of chivalry, and where the time was passed in listening to stories, and learning civility and beautiful manners."

The fashion set by Cervantes was followed in later times by John Hookham Frere, whose projected *National Work* comprising the "most in-

teresting particulars relating to King Arthur and his Round Table" is a brilliant *jeu d'esprit*; and by Mr. Clemens ("Mark Twain") whose *Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* scarcely ranks either among his witty or his memorable productions. The greater number of modern writers, having neither the provocation nor the excuse of Cervantes, have selected for treatment the worthier and purer side of chivalry,* but their idealisation

* Frere's poem was caustic, but it had a certain value in showing the unromantic side of Arthurian times. The following verses, than which far less delicate ones could be found in the poem, may be taken as a specimen:—

"And certainly they say, for fine behaving
 King Arthur's Court has never had its match;
 True point of honour, without pride or braving,
 Strict etiquette for ever on the watch;
 Their manners were refined and perfect—saving
 Some modern graces which they could not catch,
 As spitting through the teeth, and driving stages,
 Accomplishments reserved for distant ages.
 They looked a manly, generous generation;
 Beards, shoulders, eyebrows, broad, and square, and
 thick;
 Their accents firm and loud in conversation,
 Their eyes and gestures eager, sharp, and quick,
 Showed them prepared on proper provocation,
 To give the lie, pull noses, stab, and kick;
 And for that very reason it is said,
 They were so very courteous and well bred."

When we come to consider probabilities, aided by such un-

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had led to confusion also. Such sober history as exists proves conclusively that the knights of the most chivalrous age lacked those attributes upon which so much stress has been laid, to the glory of poetry but to the obscuring of fact. It is not within my scope, however, to dwell longer upon this subject, but to call attention to the Round Table either as its reputed existence or as the use of its name may be regarded as an indication of the extent of King Arthur's realm. But here, perhaps, we reach the most doubtful ground of all. Wherever we step we touch a crumbling footway or find ourselves utterly lost in a region of superstitions. The advance along this illusive track would therefore be unprofitable, but that it enables us to perceive how Arthurian traditions permeate the land, how tenaciously the supposititious links with him and his age are cherished, and how the crudest facts are

sparing lines as these, we may even accept as truth the old folk-song which tells that when King Arthur ruled the land he "ruled it like a swine." The American poet, the late Mr. Eugene Field, in his "Lay of Camelot," has also shown the humorous aspect of the Arthurian Court. While all this may be legitimate enough, and provide opportunities for the wit of the authors, it is not the aspect which we prefer to contemplate for any length of time, or one which has any continuous pleasure for the mind.

turned to account in order that some claim may be popularly justified to association with his fame.

Of the multitude of places in Britain claiming to possess King Arthur's Round Table, the ancient capital of Winchester ranks first. Caxton in his famous Prologue provides a list of proofs of Arthur's actual existence—"In the castel of Dover ye may see Gauwayne's skulle, and Cradok's mantel; at Wynchester, the rounde table; in other places, Launcelottes sworde, and many other thynges." Tradition ascribes the foundation of Winchester Castle to King Arthur in the year 523, and the large oaken table there hanging in the Chapel of St. Stephen, carved with the figure of the king and the names of the knights, is affirmed to be the identical board at which he and his knights assembled. King Henry VIII exhibited it as such to the Emperor Charles, but alas for romance! the researches of modern antiquaries have caused it to be ascribed to the time of Stephen, thus disposing once and for all of Drayton's proud contention—

"And so great Arthur's seat ould Winchester prefers,
Whose ould round table yet she vaunteth to be hers,"

and equally falsifying Warton's declaration—

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“ High hung remains, the pride of former years,
Old Arthur's board : on the capacious round
Some British pen has sketched the names renown'd,
In marks obscure of his immortal peers.”

The great antiquity of Winchester would make its possession of such a relic, if genuine, quite possible. The ancient capital of England was possessed by the Romans, who erected the massive walls and temples of which it justly boasts. Some authorities declare that the first Christian church was erected in Winchester about the year 169, three centuries or more before King Arthur's time, and that it was converted into a temple of Dagon, or Woden, by the Saxons late in the fifth century. Portion of Winchester was called by the Romans “Gwent,” or the Hollow, and this name being confused with the Gwent in Monmouthshire probably led to the transference of the scenes of the Arthurian legend to the famous capital. This class of error, as has been already pointed out, has not been infrequently met with in old chronicles. It was owing to some such confusion of ideas in the mind of King Henry VII that he named his son, born in Winchester Castle, after the Arthur of romance. Winchester, in fact, plays no mean part in the Arthurian drama. It was at times confused with Camelot, and given as the alternative name of that place. But there

is no substance in the claim that the Round Table now to be seen in Winchester is really Arthurian. Even Defoe in his eighteenth-century chronicle of a journey from London to Land's End talks contemptuously of the pretence to pass off the relic as "a piece of antiquity to the tune of twelve hundred years," and he threw absolute discredit upon the whole story.

Caerleon-on-Usk, the historic capital of King Arthur's realm, claims (as we have related) also to possess the Round Table, but in this instance the visitor is taken to a field, still bearing the name of the Round Table Field, in which a circular cavity probably marks the site of a Roman encampment. The local legend is that beneath this field King Arthur and his knights sleep entranced, and await the summons to come forth and save England from peril. On the top of Cadbury Hill, Somerset, at a spot known as Cadbury Camp, a vast artificial circle, which is doubtless also of Roman origin, is designated the Round Table; and about half a mile from Penrith in Scotland a circular intrenchment, eighty-seven feet in diameter, is popularly known by the same name. Scott mentions "Penrith's Table Round" in his *Bridal of Triermain*, and one of Lockhart's notes explains that the circle within the ditch is

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about one hundred and sixty paces in circumference, with openings, or approaches, directly opposite each other. "As the ditch is on the inner side it could not be intended for the purpose of defence, and it has been reasonably conjectured that the enclosure was designed for the solemn exercise of feats of chivalry, and the embankment around for the convenience of spectators." This Scotch reference has a significance of its own, but, standing alone, and combated by other claims, it cannot be deemed of very high importance.

Sir Walter Scott quotes the lines of the poet David Lindsay—

"Adew, fair Snawdon, with thy towris hie,
Thy chapell-royall, park, and Tabyll Round,"

which removes the relic, natural or artificial, to North Wales; but Anglesey also claims that what others call a Roman camp overlooking Redwharf Bay is the "Burdd Arthur," or Arthur's Round Table. Leland's Itinerary contains the announcement that near Denbigh "there is, in the Paroch of Llansannen in the Side of a Stony Hille, a Place wher there be twenty-four Holes or Places in a Roundel for Men to sitte in, but sum lesse, and some bigger, cutte out of the mayne Rock by Mannes Hand; and there Children and Young

Men cumming to seke their Catelle use to sitte and play. Sum caulle it the Rounde Table. Kiddes use their communely to play and skip from Sete to Sete." No conclusion can be drawn, and no satisfaction can be gained, from this medley of conflicting claims : we learn only that the tradition was widely diffused and that either in a spirit of contention to claim possession of the relic, or with the desire to ensure the survival of the recollection by symbols, the name came to be indiscriminately bestowed upon artificial imitations or natural resemblances of the original. George Borrow, however, favoured the Welsh localities as truly Arthurian.

If we turn to the question of the number of the knights supposed to range themselves at the Table Round we find similar diversity both of record and opinion, and equal preposterousness in rival claims. The Table at Winchester had "sieges" for twenty-five, including the king. The Table mentioned by Malory had "sieges" for one hundred and fifty : one hundred were sent by Leodegraunce, Merlin found twenty-eight more, King Arthur chose Sir Gawaine and Sir Tor, and the remaining twenty were left for those who proved themselves worthy. Yet the old frontispiece to Malory's History showed only thirty

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knights seated at the Table; Scott, in his *Triermain*, mentions only sixteen; and the old ballad on Arthur specifies the number of "good and able knights" as fifty. To leave such details, let it suffice to learn from Malory that "by the noble fellowship of the Table Round was King Arthur borne up"; or let us agree with Drayton, for the sake of poetical justice, that Arthur's and Charlemagne's knights were of exactly the same number—

"Who bear the bow were knights in Arthur's reign,
Twelve they, and twelve the knights of Charlemagne."

Among the many remarkable traditions concerning the Round Table is that which survives in Wales that Arthur assembled his followers on the heights of the Brecknockshire Beacons, and there made known his design to establish a knighthood and to found a Table Round. On the summit of Pen-y-Van may yet be seen huge stones and rock fragments which the superstitious regard as the broken relics of the Table, to the real existence of which far more attention has been given than to its allegorical significance. The Round Table is, in fact, purely symbolical throughout the romance, an idea conveyed by the customary means of a simple figure, a parable. It is illustrative of the equality and the unity of

the order of chivalry, and of the singleness of purpose and ambition of the Arthurian warriors and adventure-seekers. The breaking up of the Table Round is the sign of the falling away in allegiance of the knights and of the approaching disintegration of Arthur's kingdom. When the fellowship of the knights is strongest and the complement is complete, the king is at the height of his power; when there are vacant seats at the Table, there are indications of a decline; when only a remnant of the knights meets once more at the monarch's call, the kingdom is half-lost; when the fellowship is broken and the Round Table has disappeared, the end of Arthur's reign is come, and his power is shattered for ever. "We all understand," said Sir Lancelot, "in this realm will be now no quiet, but ever strife and debate, now the fellowship of the Round Table is broken; for by the noble fellowship of the Round Table was King Arthur upborne, and by their nobleness the King and all his realm was in quiet and in rest."

By the deftness of the chroniclers the symbolism of the Round Table becomes slightly intermixed with the symbolism of the Grail quest, Sir Galahad, the perfect knight who could sit in the Siege Perilous, being the only knight who could

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be blessed with the vision of the Holy Grail. It was those alone of the fellowship of the Round Table who entered upon the quest, and it was the one pure hero, the man of most worship, who achieved that quest. Two seats in the Round Table were left vacant by Merlin. One was filled by King Pellinore when he had proved his worthiness; "but in the Siege Perilous," said Merlin, "there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow." The double prophecy was fulfilled. The unworthy knight who attempted to occupy the siege was carried away in a flame that burst forth instantaneously, and Merlin's own fate is by some ascribed to his inadvertence in sitting in that mysterious chair, strangely carved and lettered. But for Galahad there was no such fear. Long did the Siege Perilous remain vacant, for while Arthur and his knights were building up the kingdom Lancelot's son was unborn. But at the assembling of the fellowship one Whitsuntide a hermit predicted to the king that that same year one should be born who would sit in the Siege Perilous and win the Sangreal. Henceforth the two ideas are found constantly united. At Camelot all the seats at the Table were found newly

written with gold letters, and upon the Siege Perilous were the mystic words : "Four hundred winters and fifty-four accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this Siege to be fulfilled." The knights were filled with wonderment, and they awaited the coming of the worshipful man who could sit there and not be harmed. Only miracles were wrought that day; the air and sky were full of omens, and Lancelot said : "I will that ye wit that this same day will the adventures of the Sangreal begin." "A good old man, and an ancient," clothed in white, entered the palace, bringing with him a young knight without arms. No one knew whence they came, but they listened in awe to the reverend stranger, who declared that the youth by his side was the long-expected knight, of the king's lineage, of the kindred of Saint Joseph, destined to sit in the Siege Perilous and to achieve the Grail quest. It was Galahad, Sir Lancelot's own son, having for his mother Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, who was "cousin nigh unto Joseph of Arimathie," and the possessor of the Holy Vessel. In the mysterious seat the young knight sat unfearing, and the knights beholding this whispered to each other, "This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be achieved." It was

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the virgin knight who could alone draw out the sword from the stone, and who again proved himself the greatest, after which he began with religious ardour his appointed task.

Galahad's story was a late addendum to the Arthurian legend, and it is very difficult to suppose that he was an historic figure. Yet his prototype is said to have existed in the person of Catwg the wise (Cadog), the second principal of Llanancarfan College, where he was the successor of the renowned Bishop Dubois. In his youth Catwg had been a soldier, later he joined the Christian Church, and the neophyte had the advantage of receiving personal instruction from the aged master, the foremost divine of Arthur's time. But the suggestion that Cadog was Galahad is scarcely open to serious consideration, and Walter Map, the first to relate the history of the virgin knight, was not likely to have had any such prototype in his mind. His conception seems to have been mainly poetic. The story is crowded with mysteries, superstitions, and idealisms. Galahad is scarcely human in any of his attributes, and he is so invested with marvels that we may safely set him down as an imaginary type or the most shadowy of traditional figures.

In discussing the real Arthur, as distinct from

the Arthur of romance, we have to bear in mind that he was primarily the warrior, the representative of a cause which necessitated the constant display of his power in battle. As such he was first celebrated by the bards, and it was around the warrior and chief that the romance grew. From being simply a military leader, he became a type of hero about whom gathered many legends, and in course of time he was made the central figure in all the stories of marvellous adventure current in the early days. That there was an Arthur leading a forlorn hope, chief of a people slow to yield and hard to subdue, need scarcely be questioned. He is the original hero, the last and greatest of a conquered race; he is the giant-figure standing behind the mythical Arthur of fable and romance. Born when his land was attacked by the invader and his people were fearing extinction, he valorously met the foe, and for a while stemmed the victorious current of the Saxon and the Roman arms. Defeated at last, he became, as was inevitable, a type of hero—a later Odin, a demi-god—and in the romances and songs we read rather of aims than accomplishments, of desires than of deeds. More and more as time cast its glamour about him, King Arthur became the embodiment of a national aspiration,

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and the vanquished race revenged its defeat in songs of defiance, songs which vaunted of victory and were matched to triumphant strains, songs which relieved the thought of present disaster and recalled only the olden triumphs or prompted dreams of future glory. These songs took their rise in prophecies and sprang forth into golden promise of power and success. Speedily the ideal replaced the real. Poet after poet, chronicler after chronicler, added attributes to the hero; and ultimately from one strong man waging desperate war against outnumbering foes, the Arthur of romance was evolved, the Arthur whose conquests were an unbroken series and whose territory was limitless, the Arthur with his invincible knight-hood, the Arthur who could never die, but who, in Merlin's words, "like the dawn will arise from his mysterious retreat." The legends supply one more proof that a nation with a voice, with the power of utterance, is invincible in spirit; captive and conquered though it may be, it remains unsubdued and free in impulse and thought. We can conceive how bold and defiant the spirit of the Cymri remained when in the eyes of the race the defeated king was still visible as the master of all kings, and the vanquished people could boast that he who fell under the Roman yoke—



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle

THE ROCKY VALLEY, TINTAGEL

[To face p. 150]

“ Swept the dust of ruin’d Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crushed
The Idolaters, and made the people free.”

To this race Caerleon and Camelot became cities of magic splendour and magnificence, and the courts and camps of Arthur surpassed in strength and riches the luxurious home of Cæsar. The land was strewn with relics of Arthur’s power; the downs and plains were the scenes of his momentous victories; the hills were his chairs and footstools; the old encampments were the scenes of famous tourneys; the dark woods suggested the scenes of strange adventures for the knights; the holy wells, the rivers, and the places where Nature was brightest and most beautiful, were all associated with leading events and enterprises in the history of the king and his noble retinue. Particularly did the Cymri insist upon the successive and overwhelming defeats by Arthur of the Saxons, their traditional and most hated foe. And in their vauntings they gave Arthur the mastery of half Europe, claimed that the Roman Emperor became his vassal, and that upon his head the Pope himself placed a crown.

Arthur fought twelve great battles against the Saxons, the dates varying from 457 to 604.* Either

* The names of, and the leading incidents in, the twelve

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names have been mixed, or the chroniclers have monstrously departed from fact, or else we must conclude that the British warrior was actually king of the greater part of England, Wales, and Scotland, for his victories extend from Cornwall to Lincoln, and from Caerleon in Wales to the Scotch Lowlands. The twelfth and greatest of his victories was at Mount Badon, where "in one bout," we are told, "Arthur vanquished eight hundred and forty-one," and "no man overthrew them but himself alone." The identity of Mount Badon, where "our good Arthur broke once more the Pagan" has long been a matter of dispute. It has been contended that Bath was none other than Mons Badonicus, and that the actual battlefield was a spot known as Banner Down; but the claim has almost entirely been abandoned now that so much evidence is forthcoming in favour of another site. Bath seems to have been fixed upon as a likely place not only on account of its veritable antiquity and its early occupation by the Romans, but because it appeared to be a sort of

"glorious wars," are enumerated with accuracy by Tennyson in *Lancelot and Elaine*, the recital coming from Lancelot's lips, and having for its purpose the proof that at the time "there lived no greater leader." Joseph Ritson's curious little volume on King Arthur likewise treats this subject fully.

translation or corruption of the word Badon. But this is an etymological blunder, for, as has been pointed out, a sixth century word cannot be elucidated in this free manner with the help of a word which had no existence until the tenth century. The authorities are now fairly well agreed that Badon must be identified with Badbury Rings, but again a difficulty arises, for there are two places called Badbury, not very far from each other, one in Wiltshire and the other in Dorset. There is also a *Caer Badon* in Berkshire which at least two historians have favoured as the scene of Arthur's crucial contest with Cerdic. Our knowledge of the battle comes from the Welsh bards who celebrated it in vaunting songs, and from Gildas and Bede, but none of them assists us to establish where Badon was, or, for the matter of that, at what date the battle was fought. Lady Charlotte Guest reminds us that Gildas, who bore the name of *Badonicus* from being born in the year in which the battle was fought,* described Badon as being at the mouth of the Severn, but this passage has been declared an interpolation. Mr. Freeman, Mr. Stokes, and other modern historians give their

* Gildas *Badonicus*, as we have seen in the first chapter, is also a reputed native of Bath.

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vote for Badbury in Dorset, but without mentioning their reasons. The Badbury in Wiltshire seems to me to be the more likely place if for no other reason than that King Arthur is often mentioned as travelling through that county, and as being in the vicinity of Salisbury and Stonehenge, whereas Dorset seems to have been outside the sphere of his visits and operations. The Wiltshire Badbury is only a few miles from the gigantic and mysterious megalithic structure which had actually been attributed by Geoffrey of Monmouth and others to Aurelius Ambrosius, or Arthur. One tradition ran that it was a monument erected by the Britons on the spot where the massacre of the British nobles took place by order of Hengist. But in the light of science we learn that Stonehenge was an antiquity in the time of the Celts, and that its origin must have been as much a mystery to the contemporaries of King Arthur as it is to us of to-day. Stonehenge is not mentioned by the old chroniclers, but, remarkable to say, neither is Badon; but Salisbury is the subject of Merlin's fateful prophecy of Arthur's doom in the battle with Mordred. Mr. Joseph Ritson went exhaustively into the subject of Mons Badonicus, and after citing all that was recorded of it by Archbishop Usher, Matthew of Westminster, Gildas, Geoffrey, Sir John Prise,

and many others, he still left the issue uncertain. What alone seems to be established is that the battle was a decisive triumph for the British against the Saxons under Cerdic, and that Arthur personally performed prodigies of valour. Tennyson has represented him charging at the head of his knights, and standing high on a heap of the slain watching the flying foe; and Drayton has sung—

“ How he himself at Badon bore that day,
When at the glorious gole his British scepter lay;
Two daies together how the battel tronglie tood :
Pendragon's worthie son, who waded there in blood,
Three hundred Saxons slew with his own valiant hand.”

It is a truly marvellous account which is given of Arthur's valorous conduct at the battle of Badon. Wearing his breastplate, his gold helmet with the dragon device upon it, and taking his sword Excalibur, his spear Ron, and his shield Pridwen, he first received a blessing from the Bishop Dubritius, and then headed his force against the Saxons, who received the attack in a wedge-formation, as was their custom. The issue of the battle long remained in doubt. The fighting was of the most desperate character on both sides, and at the close of day the Saxons had the advantage. Next morning the contest was resumed, Arthur storming the mount and being at a disadvantage by having the lower position. His

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personal example, however, fired his troops with courage. Drawing his sword and uttering the name of St. Mary he rushed among the enemy and dealt such strokes that a man fell each time. In all 470 Saxons lay dead as the result of that terrific onslaught, and the Britons rushing in at the right moment completed the Saxon rout. This was the end of a long campaign which had taken Arthur through Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, and Somerset. The date of the battle, as is usual with Arthurian dates, cannot be fixed. It is given by different chroniclers as 493, 511, as 516 in the *Annales Cambriæ*, and as 520.

It is surprising that Badon* should remain vague and undefined, when the sites of some of the other and less important battles are in most cases not dubious and are easily ascertained. We know, for example, that Barham Down, or Barendowne, the scene of one of the last encounters with Mordred, was near Canterbury; and the fact that thereabouts was an Anglo-Saxon cemetery may either be testimony to the fact, or may have suggested to the chroniclers the likelihood of its being an ancient battlefield. Mr. Ritson traced

* Mr. E. W. B. Nicholson, in the *Academy* (1896), advanced a number of very strong and learned arguments in favour of the original idea that Mons Badonicus was Bath.

the localities of the other Arthurian struggles to the banks of the Glen in Lincolnshire and of the Douglas in Lancashire; he thought Bassas might be Bashford in Staffordshire, though others favour Boston in Lincolnshire; Cathbregion was in Somersetshire, and so forth. Of these battles we have no details in Malory. On the other hand, we have a long account of the expedition to Italy undertaken by Arthur against the Emperor of Rome after the latter had presumed to demand tribute from him. His complete humiliation of the Emperor's subjects is, of course, insisted upon. Prisoners were taken in large numbers and compelled to become Christians; a duchess besought him to spare the women and children, and Arthur thereupon issued magnanimous orders; the keys of cities were brought to him by young men, and his march through northern Italy was one continuous triumph. "Then he rideth into Tuscany," says Malory in his most laconic style, "and winneth towns and castles, and wasted all in his way that to him will not obey." Finally the senators offered him allegiance, and the noblest cardinals in Rome came voluntarily to him and "prayed him peace." Arthur accepted their gifts, and decided to hold his Table Round, "with my knights as we liketh," in Rome at Christmas. Then, having been crowned by the

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Pope "with all the royalty that could be made," he apportioned the realms among his knights and servants, and returned to England, landing at Sandwich,* where the queen and a large company were waiting to receive him. King Arthur, his knighthood, his undefeated warriors, and his almost miraculous battles, are perhaps more a theme for the poet than for the historian. Such lines as Lytton's accord with the romance, and realise the aspirations of the unsubjugated tribe and of those who sang its fame and prophesied its future triumph.

" Rings Owaine's shout,—rings Geraint's thunder-cry,
The Saxon's death knell in a hundred wars;
And Cadur's laugh of triumph :—through the sky
Rush tossing banderolls swift as shooting stars,
Trystan's white lion—Lancelot's cross of red,
And Tudor's standard with the Saxon's head.
And high o'er all, its sealèd splendour rears
The vengeful emblem of the Dragon Kings.
Full on the Saxon bursts the storm of spears;
Far down the vale the charging whirlwind rings,
While through the ranks its barbed knighthood clave,
All Carduel follows with its roaring wave."

* Sandwich is mentioned several times in the romance, but the references are unimportant. Ancient as the place is, there is no reason to connect it with British occupation. At the time the chronicles were written, however, it was too important a seaport to escape mention.

CHAPTER VII

OF CAMELOT AND ALMESBURY

“ With tabor blithe and bugle sound,
Unto King Arthur’s Table Round,
Right valiant hearts I wot,
Drink, in thy spirit’s lusty glee,
And pledge with fullest jollity
These knights of Camelot.”—

Richard Hengist Horne.

“ King Arthur at Camelot kept his Court Royall
With his faire Queene, Dame Guiniver the gay ;
And many bold barons sitting in hall,
With ladies attired in purple and pall :
And heraults with hewkes hooting on high,
Cryed “ Largesse ! Largesse ! Chevaliers très-
hardies ! ”—*Percy Reliques.*

“ God’s holy name was on his tongue,
Thine in his heart—Queen Guinevere.”—*Paton.*

THOSE who press the question, where is many-tower’d Camelot, where is the royal mount rising between the forest and the field, where is the flashing city of the marvellous gate, may be referred by the veracious historian to a village in France, or by the unromantic antiquary to a

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hamlet in Scotland. Time has razed the real city, wherever it was, and the poet can invest it with charms and environ it with wonders which it never possessed. The simple lover of the legend will be content to find King Arthur's favourite haunt in the fair domain of England, amid the sleepy vales and the undisturbed hills of restful Somerset. On the Mendips, within sight of a long range of wooded verdant hills, many a tower and steeple dotting the vale which sweeps away until lost in the bluish haze of distance, here and there a bright homestead twinkling on the heights or nestling in the bowery hollows, there is a deserted place called Cadbury Camp. A stone wall winds round an ancient encampment and marks its bounds, and just across the open land looking towards Portishead lie the widening waters of the Bristol Channel. The hills around show every variety of green as they stretch further and further from the shore, and one would think that the region had been unvisited for a thousand years. And if tradition be true, this was Camelot, Camelot where King Arthur sought repose; Camelot where Sir Lancelot brought the daughter of King Leodegraunce of the land of Cameliard, "the gentilest and fairest lady"; Camelot where the king was wedded "unto dame

GuenEVER in the church of St. Stevens with great solemnitie." It was at Camelot, on the occasion of this ceremony, that Merlin bade the knights of the Round Table (the gift of Leodegrance to King Arthur) to sit still while he showed them "a strange and marvellous adventure." As they sat waiting and expectant, a white hart ran into the hall, followed by a white brachet (or scenting hound) and by thirty couple of black running hounds "with a great crie"; and the hart, wounded by the brachet, overthrew one of the knights, and led Sir Gawaine, accompanied by Sir Gaheris, upon a wonderful quest, in which he fought against great odds, slew a lady in a castle by misadventure, learnt that "a knight without mercy is without worshippe," and returning to Camelot, saddened and disgraced, was bidden by the king and queen henceforth to "be with al ladyes and to fight for their quarrels."

It is worthy of note that Gawaine not only plays a most important part in the romance, but that, like Sir Kay, his character is variously described and at times unnecessarily assailed by the chroniclers. By laborious efforts his intentions are perverted and contempt thrown upon his actions, and the episode of the "foule and shameful" slaying of the lady enabled the chroniclers

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to dwell upon his "vilanous" deed and his mercilessness, while at the same time they were able to explain his subsequent acts of courtesy as the result of the duty put upon him by the king. Gawaine was Arthur's nephew, the son of Morgan le Fay, and Malory presents him to us alternately as the soul of chivalry and the type of faithlessness. This accounts for Tennyson's query, "Art thou not he whom men call light-of-love?" and for the poet's assertion that his courtesy had "a touch of traitor in it." Gawaine is frequently made the subject of reproof in the romance, though he came out nobly in the end when he vowed to be revenged on sinful Lancelot, fought him valorously, and died like a great hero. According to the original Welsh story, it must be remembered, Gawaine was called the Golden-Tongued, owing to his powers of persuasion, none being able to resist him what he asked. In the Triads he is addressed by Arthur as "Gwalchmai, of faultless answers," and revolting Tristram, who dared the king to nine hundred combats, listened to Gawaine and yielded to his solicitation. The tomb of Gawaine, according to William of Malmesbury, was discovered in the time of William the Conqueror in Wales, county Pembroke, where Lady Charlotte Guest tells us there is a district called Castell Gwalchmai.

Gawaine's courtesy was proverbial in Chaucer's time, and the Welsh historians impute to him great scientific learning—"there was nothing of which he did not know the elements and the material essence." Hence Scott's reference to "the gentle Gawain's courteous lore." * All this is inconsistent with the levity and harshness attributed to him by Malory, though his wanton betrayal of Sir Pelleas and his guilty relations with Ettarde exposed him to the charge of infamy and caused him to lose grace in the sight of those chroniclers who had begun to give a spiritual significance to the tales of Arthur's Court, and to find in the recital opportunities for preaching purity.

Pelleas's hopeless love for the scornful maiden is one of the saddest stories which form part of the Arthurian records. In his despair at being rejected by the "sovereign lady" for whom he had fought and prevailed, he sought the help of Sir Gawaine—"And, Sir Knight, sith ye are so

* Lytton, agreeing with Southey that Gawaine's character suffered at the caprice of the poets and that he was "shamefully calumniated," speaks of

" Frank Gawaine,
Whom mirth for ever, like a fairy child,
Lock'd from the cares of life."

William Morris, in *The Defence of Guenevere*, makes Gawaine the accuser of the queen, and he is denounced for treachery.

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nigh a cousin unto King Arthur, and a king's son, therefore I pray thee, betray me not, but help me, for I may never come by her but by the help of some good knight; for she is in a strong castle here fast by, within this four miles, and over all this country she is lady of." Gawaine vowed to serve him, and declared that he would ride to the castle, taking with him Pelleas's horse and armour, and tell her that he had slain her lover: "and so shall I come within to her, and then shall I do my true part, and ye shall not fail to have her love." But instead of winning Ettarde for Pelleas, he won her for himself, declaring that he had slain Pelleas and had come for her love. They went out of the castle and dwelt with each other for two days in a pavilion. The rest of the pitiful story is best told in Malory's own words. "And on the third day, in the morning early, Sir Pelleas armed him, for he had not slept sith that Sir Gawaine departed from him; for Sir Gawaine had promised him by the faith of his body to come unto him to his pavilion by the priory within the space of a day and a night. Then Sir Pelleas mounted on horsebacke, and came to the pavilion that stood without the castle. . . . Then hee went to the third pavilion and found Sir Gawaine with his lady Ettarde; and

when he saw that, his heart almost brast with sorrow, and he said: 'Alas, that ever a knight should bee found so false.' And then he tooke his horse and might no longer abide for sorrow. And when hee had ridden nigh halfe a mile, he turned againe and thought to sley them both, and when he saw them lye so fast sleeping, unneth (scarcely) hee might hold him on horseback for sorrow, and said thus to himselfe, 'Though this knight be never so false, I will not sley him sleeping, for I will never destroy the high order of knighthood.' . . . And when he came to the pavilions (a third time) he tied his horse to a tree, and pulled out his sword naked in his hand, and went straight to them where as they lay together, and yet he thought that it were great shame for him to sley them sleeping, and laid the naked sword overthwart both their throats, and then hee tooke his horse, and rod foorth his way, making great and wofull lamentation." Such is the story of Sir Gawaine and Sir Pelleas, knights of Camelot.

At Camelot, at the vigil of Pentecost, the knights gathered, Sir Gawaine among them, and his falseness began to bring upon him retribution. All the seats at the Round Table were filled, save the Siege Perilous, though the time had now

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come, "four hundred winters, and four and fifty being accomplished, after the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ," that the place should be no longer vacant. The king wished, according to custom, to see an adventure before sitting down to meat, and tidings were brought him of a marvellous stone floating in the river, and a sword sticking in it. Lancelot warned the knights not to touch the sword: "Who assayeth for to take that sword, and faileth of it, he shall receive a wound by that sword." Nevertheless, Gawaine, obeying the command of the king, took the sword by the handle, but failed to move it; and Gawaine next day vowed to set forth upon the quest of the Grail, the vision of which had appeared unto the assembly when they returned from "Camelot's minster." His quest was unavailing. Through the streets of Camelot the knights sallied forth, "and there was weeping of the rich and poor, and the king returned away, and might not speak for weeping." Of all who failed, Gawaine failed most signally. The monk of the abbey where he sought refuge condemned his wickedness, and the good men at the hermitage of whom he asked harbour for charity, reproached him with his mischievous life of many winters, and sternly bade him do penance. If Sir Gawaine redeemed his

reputation as the champion of the injured king, it scarcely sufficed to atone for the evil he wrought when the days were fair at Camelot.

In the *Prologue* by Caxton we are told that record of King Arthur was to be found in "the toun of Camelot, the grete stones and mervaylous werkys of yron lying under the ground, and ryal vautes, which dyvers now lyving hath seen." These relics have vanished, and Camelot is nothing but a waste. But there is just a chance that Caxton had some other Camelot than South Cadbury in his mind, for he speaks of it as in Wales, while in the story of the burial of Balin and Balan by Merlin we read that "Balin's sword was put in marble stone, standing upright as great as a milstone, and the stone hove alwayes above the water, and did many yeares, and so by adventure it swam downe the streame to the cite of Camelot, that is in English, Winchester." * This confusion is easily explained. Putting aside the fact that there is little coherence or consistency in the geography of the romance, we have already suggested a reason for the chronicler's

* As a matter of history it is worth noting that Winchester, in Hampshire, passed to the Saxons in the year 515, after which time Cardic held it. King Arthur was then only twenty-three years old, and could not have extended his territory as far as Hampshire.

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statement that Camelot was Winchester. In Monmouthshire is *Caer-went*, a resort of King Arthur, and Winchester was known as *Caer-wynt*, a sufficiently close resemblance to lead the old chroniclers astray. Obviously there must have been more than one Camelot, if we are to pay any heed to the situation, distance, and characteristics mentioned in Malory's chapters. *Caer-went* has a history dating back to the fifth century, when a school or college was founded there by *Ynyr Gwent*, king of the district called *Gwent*, and the husband of Vortimer's daughter, *Madrun*. At *Caer-went* was fought one of the last British battles with the Saxons just as they were reaching the gates of *Caerleon* itself. The town is situated on the *Via Julia*, or military road, made by *Julius Frontius* in the year 80, and traces of it remained at the beginning of last century. *Leland* speaks of its four great gates which "yet appear," and an enthusiastic pilgrim in 1802 wrote that the place, despite its present uninviting and desolate aspect, deserved "every attention that can be bestowed by the antiquarian or lover of those scites memorable for having been the scenes of magnificence, genius, and heroism. Roman greatness has at this place shone with a splendour little inferior to any other part of the kingdom." By some *Caer-went* is supposed to have been the

capital of the Silures, before Caerleon, and to have had a population of ten thousand. Leland describes it as "a sumtyme fair and large cyte." As a British camp it may figure under various names in the romances.

We associate Camelot with the more peaceful part of Arthur's life, and with the brighter and more hopeful history of his followers, though sad and tragic episodes in that history are by no means lacking. Up the soft velvety sward came the knights in armour ready to tourney for the prize of ladies' smiles, and where the bee buzzes and the pheasant runs was heard the clash of arms or the caracolling of many steeds. Here, too, and we tell now a more certain truth, came the Roman with his legions; here met contending forces, and the repose of the land was broken with the tumult of war. Time has swept away every vestige of the power and glory of old, and left the open field, the trench, and the broken gray wall, as the sole mementoes of Camelot, but about all has retained the glamour of one heroic name. The rabbit and the mole burrow to the foundations of Arthur's royal town, and the centuries have laid moss and leaf upon the unfrequented paths and the vanishing signs of former occupation. Yet no one can spend an hour at Cadbury Camp without feeling that "the dust we

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tread once breathed." The Severn sparkles in the distance, and was probably the "river of Camelot," where Merlin set the "peron" or tombstone, and where Sir Tristram appointed his meeting with Palamides.

No description of Camelot, with its courts and towers, its knights and people, could be more entrancing than Tennyson's. He told of the mighty hall built by Merlin, with its mystic symbols in sculpture and statuary; and he said that it was reached by the "sacred mount"—

"And all the dim, rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire by spire,
By grove and garden-lawn, and rushing brook."

Arthur's statue had been moulded with a crown, and "peaked wings pointing to the Northern Star," and this representation again calls attention to the astronomical significance of the history of the king whose name is preserved in Arcturus, the star of first magnitude, above which is set "Arthur's chair," Ursa Major.

There may not be much to warrant the various traditions of Camelot, and there remains nothing to verify them. South Cadbury, or Cadbury Camp, silent and deserted as it now is, undoubtedly has a curious history. It was anciently known as Camallate and Camellek, and was early

associated with King Arthur; it was a hill-fort of that strange, strong race of warriors, the Belgæ, who overran the southern counties and were dislodged from their strongholds with the greatest difficulty by the Romans. This camp was as the rallying-point in the British and Christian dominion of Gladerhaf, or Somerset. Some have supposed it was the Cathbrigion where Arthur routed the Saxons in a great battle, and so linked his name indissolubly with the locality. Leland in his *Itinerary* described it as "sometime a famous town or castle, upon a very torre or hill, wonderfully enstrengthened of nature"; and John Selden, in his notes to the *Polyolbion* of Drayton, definitely described it as "a hill of a mile compass at the top, four trenches encircling it, and twixt every one of them an earthen wall; the contents of it, within about twenty acres, full of ruins and relics of old buildings." It has yielded various ancient weapons, Roman coins, a silver horse-shoe, and articles of camp equipage. The four concentric deep ditches and the ramparts, forty-five feet apart, can still be traced, and the camp seems to have been originally connected with an extensive intrenchment on the opposite summit of the hill to the north-west. From its position Cadbury must have been an important station com-

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manding the military road which ran from Bower Walls on the Avon to the neighbouring heights of Clevedon—the little town which gave birth to Arthur Henry Hallam, whose ancestral abode, Clevedon Court, is sheltered by the fir-trees which are seen grouped in gloom from Cadbury's height. At Clevedon also dwelt Coleridge for a time, as several of his poems, written in celebration of the surrounding scenes, will for ever remind us. From Cadbury can be discerned the pretty village of Wrington, where is cherished the memory of the Rev. W. Leeves, who fashioned for "Auld Robin Gray" a fitting melody. It is easy to perceive that the possessor of a stronghold on Cadbury would be able to hold in subjection the entire district, and the name of the place appears to bear witness that a decisive battle once raged there, for *cad* is the Cornish and Cymrian word for battle, and *bury* for hill or brow.

But it is Arthur, and Arthur only, who is commemorated at Cadbury Camp to-day. There may be seen his Round Table, and the local superstition runs that within the charmed circle the king may be seen sitting with his knights behind barred golden gates. The great intrenchment is called the site of King Arthur's Palace; in the field below is King Arthur's Hunting Causeway;

and it is King Arthur's Well which springs from the hillside and bubbles up in the fourth ditch. These recall the wondrous past, the golden days, when the fame and splendour of Arthur's Court were on all tongues, and the poet could long afterwards ask—

“ Like Camelot what place was ever yet renown'd,
Where, as at Caerleon, oft he kept the Table Round,
Most famous for the sports at Pentecost so long,
From whence all knightly deeds and brave achievements
sprong.”

It was at Camelot that, when Arthur “let make a crie” the lords, knights, and gentlemen of arms gathered, and “there the King would let make a counsoile generall, and a great justes.” It was to Camelot that Sir Pellinore came “passing sore” and told his saddest of stories; and it was to Camelot that King Arthur turned after wearying combat and hot adventure, certain there to enjoy rest and to find his queen and the barons “right glad of his comming.” “What tidings at Camelot?” asked one knight of another whom he encountered. “By my head,” said the other, “there have I beene, and espied the court of King Arthur, and there is such a fellowship that they may never be brok, and wel nigh al the world holdeth with King Arthur, for there is the flower of chivalry.” Such was the renown of Camelot.

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To Camelot the knights sent their prisoners to do homage to King Arthur and confess his greatness. The church of St. Stephen's, often called the Minster, was the place where the king and his followers assembled to hear the Archbishop's blessing upon their enterprises, and in the adjoining grounds the principal men slain in battle were buried with all honour. The twelve kings who fell in war with King Lot "were buried in the church of Saint Stephen's, in Camelot, and the remnant of knights and of other were buried in a great rock," so one of the records runs. By the side of Lanceor's tomb, made by Merlin, Tristram and Lancelot encountered each other and "fought together unknown," and "either wounded other wonderly sore, that the blood ran out upon the grass"; then, discovering that they were friends, they yielded up their swords, "either kissed other an hundred times," and rode back to Camelot. Elaine, the mother of Galahad, came to Camelot richly attired, and put Lancelot to shame, and it was at Camelot that the last sad scenes in their tragic drama were enacted. The quest for the Sancgreal began there, and King Arthur, full of forebodings, took a last review of his knights and caused them to assemble for a last tournament in Camelot's meadows, "that after your

death men may speak of it, that such good knights were wholly together such a day." The queen and her ladies beheld the noble gathering from her tower, and saw Sir Galahad, the perfect knight, break the spears of all who came against him save that of his father, Sir Lancelot, and that of his compeer Sir Percivale. When next we read of Camelot, Arthur is regretting the loss of half his noble company; and when the worst had come to pass, and the king discovered the wrong done to him by Lancelot and Guinevere, it was of lonely Camelot he thought with tenderest regret. Tennyson has seized upon this idea, and put into the mouth of the king the mournful soliloquy as he muses on his faithless wife—

" How sad it were to live
And sit once more within the lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,

* * * * *

And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vexed with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair."

This was when the time was come that Arthur should see Camelot no more—when he had gone forth to his last fight, and Guinevere had taken the nun's habit and immured herself in Almesbury.

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Renan has very finely remarked that in Celtic literature woman is more tenderly and delicately portrayed than in the writings and songs of any other race. Love is "a mystery, a kind of intoxication, a madness, a giddiness," and woman is superbly idealised until she seems in our eyes an ethereal, radiant, half-spiritual or even angelic creature. The romances are "dewy with feminine sentiment," and the chivalric conception of the heroine is so pure and beautiful that Percivale's sister, or Geraint's wife, appears "as a sort of vague vision intermediate between man and the supernatural world." Even faithless Guinevere—is she not so rarely beautiful, are not her spell and witchery so strong, that, while hating her sin, we hesitate to join in her condemnation, and have no heart to approve such passionate denunciation as was spoken by the king in his hour of gloom? * The vision of Guinevere flashes upon us as she was when Lancelot led her from Camelard to the king's court at Camelot, when she went a-Maying with her maidens, and when she was the cynosure of all eyes among the spectators of

* "Compare Guinevere or Iseult with those Scandinavian furies Gudrun and Chrimhilde, and you will avow that woman such as chivalry conceived her, an ideal of sweetness and loveliness set up as the supreme end of life, is a creation in reality Celtic."—*Renan*.

the tournament. There was something daring on the part of the old chroniclers in making King Arthur's danger issue from the best of knights and the most lovely of women—the two nearest to him, and bound to him by the most sacred ties of love and honour. Still more strange is it that, deep as their sinning was, we have so little blame—or rather, let us say, resentment—for Lancelot and Guinevere. This is not because Arthur has not the strongest claim upon our sympathy, or because for one moment he fails to win our admiration; it is only because Lancelot and Guinevere also have strong human claims upon us, and so far have won our regard that we cannot withhold our compassion also. Were not the knights themselves reluctant to condemn? The romance brings out the fact conspicuously that it was not the noblest, but the meanest, of the knights who revealed the wrong to the king; nor was it the gallant men who willed that Guinevere should die at the stake for her infidelity. And in the end do we not pity mournful and repentant Lancelot in his lonely castle, or when paying that noblest of tributes to his dead master? And does not even a deeper feeling extend to the desolate woman who wore out her life in the Almesbury convent?

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What ingredient of historic fact there may be in the record that the Ambresbyrig of the Saxons, and the *Caer Emrys* of the "Mabinogion" was the queen's retreat, the faithful alone must decide. All that impartial and not too credulous historians can do is to pronounce the place as not unlikely, not impossible, and not unfitting as her abode and as the scene of her last acts of restitution and repentance. Almesbury is a British earthwork of forty acres, the stronghold of Ambrosius Aurelianus, *Dux Britanniarum*, of Roman lineage, but the champion of the Britons against the Saxon horde. Religious associations both early and late cling to this ancient place, and long after Guinevere was dust a Benedictine monastery, founded by Queen Elfrida, continued the religious traditions of the earlier era; and the fact that Almesbury was the customary retreat of royal ladies who wished to withdraw from the world confirms the character of the place as depicted in Malory's chronicle. Guinevere gave herself up to lamentation among the nuns, "and never creature could make her merry"; Sir Lancelot's visit only strengthened her resolution to make amends for the past, and prompted him also to seek, too late, perfection in righteous living. While in a hermitage himself there came to him

the vision of the queen's end, and taking her corpse to Glastonbury, he performed for it the last rites, and then delivered himself over to death. His resting-place was Joyous Gard, which, in his grief he had called Dolorous Gard; the queen was laid by her husband's side in the island-valley. But at Llanilterne, near Cardiff, a huge quoin stone may be seen with an almost undecipherable *Hic jacet*, and popular tradition declares that this is Guinevere's monument. "Through this knight and me," said the queen, when Sir Lancelot and she met in the Almesbury convent, "all the wars were wrought, and the death of the most noble knights of the world: for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain; therefore, wit thou well, Sir Lancelot, I am in such a plight to get my soul's health; and yet I trust, through God's grace, that after my death for to have the sight of the blessed face of Jesu Christ, and at the dreadful day of doom to sit on his right side: for as sinful creatures as ever was I are saints in heaven." When next the "falsely true" knight saw the queen he was in his monk's habit and she was "wrapped in seared cloths of reins, from the top to the toe, in thirty fold"; then, on foot, he followed her to her tomb, recalling "her beauty, her bounty, and

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her nobleness." The next scene is at Joyous Gard itself, with Sir Lancelot smiling as he lies dead, and a hundred torches burning about him; while Sir Ector de Maris delivers the noblest of tributes to the courtliest knight, the truest friend, the meekest man, the sternest foe, and "the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman."

From Camelot to Almesbury is a far journey, and that journey marks the two extremes of Arthurian history from the happiest to the saddest, from the height of power and the plenitude of peace to the final desolation and unavailing regret. The bridge which connects Camelot with Almesbury is made up of the greatest achievements and the deepest tragedies of Arthur's reign. It is a bridge of ascent and descent, its highest point marked by the puissance of the Table Round and Galahad's achievement of the quest of the Grail, its lowest part dipping into the eternal gloom which followed the last battle in the west—a gloom from which the Britons were destined never to emerge. That gloom falls over Almesbury, but Camelot is still left in the light.

Never was, and never can be, such a fairyland as "many-tower'd Camelot." Its crystal dykes, its slope street, its weird white gate, and its spires and turrets without number, are a poet's

dream. It was the city of enchanters, built by fairy kings, a city which had no beginning, was raised by no human hands, and can have no end—

“ A city of shadowy palaces,
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient Kings who did their days in stone,”

a city of pure delights, of calm and innocence, of splendour and contentment.

“ Out of bower and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love ;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.”

Where, indeed, could be this new Eden save in the imagination of the romancer who conceived a fitting scene for King Arthur's Court? It is like the fairy gold which vanishes whenever a hand reaches out to touch it. The “Camaletic Mount” is one of Nature's hallowed places, a place of wondrous stillness and magic charm, a place to regard as the stronghold of romance, and yet not the place that poets have sung. One can easily imagine the Lady of Shalott prisoned here in her bower, and seeing all the moving world as shadows in a mirror ; and one can deem the scene appropriate for the meeting of Lancelot and the Lily-maid who lifted up her eyes and lov'd him

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with that love which was her doom. It is not well to inquire more deeply and more closely into the past of Camelot, but to heed the poet's warning—

“ Never seek to behold

Where the crystal streams ran in the City of Gold.”

Better to people it with the phantoms of Arthur's Court than to discover that the cavemen of the Mendips made it an abode. “The people can telle nothing ther, but that they have hard say that Arture much resorted to Camelot,” wrote Leland, and that suffices. Camelot is purely ideal, and it is enough to find a real Camelot which faintly recalls the place which Arthur's eulogists deemed fitting for his Court. Such cities, which had no beginning, have no end, and Camelot will last as long, and prove as indestructible, as Fairyland itself.

“ The thrushes sang in the lone garden there—

Clanging of arms about pavilion fair,

Mixed with the knights' laughs ; there, as I well know,
Rode Lancelot, the king of all the band,

And scowling Gawaine, like the night in day,
And handsome Gareth, with his great white hand

Curl'd round the helm-crest, ere he join'd the fray.”

CHAPTER VIII

OF ST. KNIGHTON'S KIEVE AND THE HOLY GRAIL

“ The war-worn champion quits the world—to hide
His thin autumnal locks where monks abide
In cloistered privacy.”—*Wordsworth.*

“ Hither came Joseph of Arimathy,
Who brought with him the Holy Grayle (they say),
And preacht the truth : but since it greatly did decay.”
Spenser.

ABOUT a mile from Tintagel, along the hilly road leading to Boscastle, and passing the wonderful little Bossiney cove with its elephant-shaped rock, there is a small rapid stream which winds through the Rocky Valley and falls like a torrent at low tide into the sea. The Rocky Valley, with its three huge boulders, its narrow walk now leading to the side of the stream and now mounting far above it, and ending only where the iron cliffs beetle above the roughest of bays, is one of the most sublime spectacles that Nature has to display in that enchanted region. The scenery is a mixture of dark and frowning heights standing

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out with precipitous sides, and of green and gentle undulations, amidst which sparkles ever and anon the tinkling sinuous brooklet. But it is not so much the valley, despite its manifold charms, as the little stream, which has a special interest for the pilgrim. By devious ways its course may be traced back through a rushy channel which lies deep and almost hidden between two sets of well-wooded hills until suddenly the traveller hears the sound of a sharp splashing from an unseen cataract. The walk now leads upward to a small gate; passing through the opening we descend once more a steep embankment and find ourselves at the water-edge. It is a haunted, sequestered spot, shut in by the hills, overcast by shadows, the one sound the sound of the leaping stream. This is St. Knighton's Kieve, once regarded with a species of holy awe in Cornwall and believed, like most natural wells or "basins," to be under the special protection and influence of a saint. The superstition is an old one, and slowly dying out, though the belief in holy wells, fairy wells, and wishing wells is one of the most pleasing and least harmful of all ancient fancies. Every spring was of yore regarded more or less as a miracle; every torrent had its tutelary genius.



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle]

ST. KNIGHTON'S KIEVE, TINTAGEL

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The Kieve is a natural bowl into which the flashing cascade plunges from the rocks above. The water has worn its way through a narrow rocky crevice and drops through a natural bridge thickly overgrown with fern and moss. The dark Kieve receives the torrent, and the water spreads out again and dimples in the shallow bed, gliding smoothly and almost silently through the luxurious plantation. Now and then we catch its gleam among the lush foliage, and a mile or more beyond may be seen the deep blue of the sea into which it pours its tiny tribute. Below the edge of the Kieve is a flat slab, and the stream is broken as it shoots down; on one side is a bulging black rock which looks darker by contrast with the shining waters. The trees form a screen through which the light passes more dimly, and this secluded half-hidden spot is perceived to be a fitting scene for the stories it has inspired.

The Kieve as a place for complete retirement would, with many disadvantages, possess the one strong and desirable advantage of being difficult to discover without those written instructions as to the winding path which are now placed in the visitor's hands. For, lying a mile or more beyond the beaten track, it can be found only after

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a confusing journey through the thick brush and weeds of the valley, over rudely constructed bridges, up steep and slippery embankments, and finally through the doorway which is kept closed and locked against all comers save those who have begun the search from the right and legal road.

If we were to adhere strictly to Malory's narrative we should say that the quest for the Holy Grail began at Camelot. Local tradition, however, is privileged to depart from written records, and it happens that in this case the scene is transferred to this spot near King Arthur's birthplace. We are asked to believe that the knights, standing with bowed heads in the Kieve, undertook the search for the Holy Vessel of the Last Supper, brought by Joseph of Arimathæa to this land, the Cup that had been hidden and lost, and was destined to be discovered only by the pure and perfect knight. The king, standing on the bridge of rock above the torrent, watched his reverent followers in the stream below laving their brows in its waters, listening to the music of the fall, and, full of the inspiration of the scene, making their solemn vows, and with a firm desire after righteousness setting forth upon the quest. Lancelot and Bors, Perceval and Galahad, when in the wild woods far distant or among the ruined

chapelries, when tormented by doubts and wrestling with foes, might be expected to recall that cool and shady gathering-place, to see in a vision the flashing cascade, to dream of the crystalline brightness of the plunging water, and with renewed hope and courage to continue their hard task.

Some such sequestered place the poet of "Sir Galahad, a Christmas Mystery," may have had in mind when he pictured the lonely knight struck with awe by hearing a voice which said that the great Quest would be achieved by him alone—

"Following
That holy Vision, Galahad, go on."

To this very spot, too, if legend be true, the knights who had failed returned.

The story of the Holy Grail is too profound and complex a study to be treated in these pages save in the most superficial and limited manner. Volumes have been and still can be devoted to the subject, and yet not exhaust all that is to be told of this world-legend with its infinite variations and its numberless phases and meanings. Like a river of many obscure sources, most of which are now partly known, thanks to the perseverance of the most devoted and painstaking of exploring scholars, it gathers in volume upon the

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way, and to trace it backward or onward involves an equally long and tortuous journey. The primary form of the legend, the actual beginning of the Grail romance cycle, remains a mystery and seemingly undiscoverable. The oldest poems on the subject, those of Christien de Troyes and Robert de Borron, were founded upon a model, or models, absolutely untraced. That it was a primitive Celtic tradition admits of no doubt, but when Walter Map incorporated the legend into the Arthurian story in the thirteenth century there were Latin, German, and French originals for him to work upon. In one chief version of the narrative Perceval is the supreme figure; in the other Galahad, Perceval, and Bors all achieve a measure of success, the first named being the absolute victor and the others being admitted to partial triumph. The Christian element in the cycle is distinct almost throughout, and the many versions have one point in common—the sanctity of the Grail, its connection with the Saviour, or with John the Baptist, and its continued miraculous power proceeding from this connection. But the Celtic originals would be free from traces of Christian symbolism. In Malory we find the Holy Vessel in the possession of King Pelleas, nigh cousin to Joseph. When the king and Sir

Lancelot went to take their repast a dove entered the window of the castle, and she bore in her bill a little censer of gold from which proceeded a savour as if all the spicery of the world had been there. The table was forthwith filled with good meats and drinks by means of the Grail, "the richest thing that any man hath living," as King Pelleas declared. Whether the Grail was a chalice which received the blood of the crucified Lord; whether, as others have affirmed, it was the dish on which the head of John the Baptist had lain; or whether it was a miraculous stone which fell from the crown of the revolting angels made for Lucifer, the belief in its reality in early times must have been sincere and ineradicable. It was said to have sustained Joseph during an imprisonment of forty-two years; the fisherman king, Pelleas, needed no food while it was in his keeping. This is set forth in Wolfram's "Parzival"—

"Whate'er one's wishes did command,
That found he ready to his hand."

Wolfram von Eschenbach, to whom both Germans and English owe so much, found a collection of badly joined fables which he turned into an epic, making Parzival (Perceval) the hero and the Grail quest the central incident. Wolfram knew nothing of Joseph of Arimathæa; but Mr. Alfred

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Nutt has pointed out that the Joseph form of the Grail story and the Perceval form may really form one organic whole, or the one part may be an explanatory after-thought. Whether the Christian element was influenced by Celtic tradition, or whether the Christian legend was superimposed upon the Celtic basis, is the subtle point which few care to say is decided. The suggestion has been thrown out that the Grail legend may even be of Jewish origin, and that in singing of their Holy City whose walls should be called "salvation," whose gates "praise," and whose "stones should be laid in fair colours," they supplied the germ from which in mediæval ages the Grail-myth sprang. The Grail was an article of strong belief with the Templars who worshipped the head of John the Baptist, which was reported to have been found in the fourth century, to have kept an Emperor from dying at Constantinople, and to have provided nourishment for all who were engaged upon religious crusades. The idea of the Holy City seems again to recall the aspiration of the Templars, and the Sarras of romance may have been none other than Jerusalem. Mr. Nutt has been able to adduce Celtic parallels for all the leading incidents in the romance of the Grail, while the many inconsistencies in the versions

are explained by the fusion of two originally distinct groups of stories. It is, as Mr. Nutt aptly says, the Christian transformation of the old Celtic myths and folk-tales which "gave them their wide vogue in the Middle Ages, which endowed the theme with such fascination for the preachers and philosophers who use it as a vehicle for their teaching, and which has endeared it to all lovers of mystic symbolism."

Four of Malory's "Books" treat of the quest of the Holy Grail and of the adventures of the knights who undertook it. These "Books" supply the spiritual and religious leaven of the romance. Only by stainless and honourable lives, not by prowess and courage, so the knights were taught, could the final goal be reached. Success in the tournament and in war was achieved by inferior means. Hardihood and skill were of no avail where the Grail was the prize. "I let you to wit," said King Pelleas, "here shall no knight win worship but if he be of worship himself and good living, and that loveth God; and else he getteth no worship here, be he ever so hardy." Sinful Lancelot was fated to test this truth. Struggle manfully as he would, victory was not for him, though, as the old hermit told Sir Bors, "had not his sin been, he had passed all the

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knights that ever were in his days "; but "sin is so foul in him that he may not achieve such holy deeds." The devoted knights might speak of Lancelot's nobleness and courtesy, his beauty and gentleness, but the quest was not for him. His expiation was severe. Of the hundred and fifty knights—"the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world—whom King Arthur reluctantly allowed to seek for the Grail, only one, the virgin Galahad, could enter the Castle of Maidens and deliver the prisoners, could hear the voices of angels foretelling his triumph, could find the Grail, and could be crowned in the holy city of Sarras, the 'spiritual place.' " It was in this city that Joseph had been succoured; it was here that Perceval's sister was entombed; it was here by general assent that the pure Galahad was proclaimed king; and it was here that the Grail remained. "And when he was come for to behold the land, he let make about the table of silver a chest of gold and of precious stones, that covered the holy vessel; and every day in the morning the three fellows (Perceval and Bors with Galahad) would come before it, and say their devotions." At the year's end Galahad saw a man kneeling before the Grail; he was in the likeness



Photo : R. Webber, Boscastle]

ST. KNIGHTON'S GLEN

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of the bishop: it was Joseph. The saint told the virgin knight that his victory had been complete and his life perfect. "And therewith," runs the beautiful chronicle, "he kneeled down before the table and made his prayers; and then suddenly his soul departed unto Jesus Christ, and a great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven that his two fellows might behold it; also, his two fellows saw come from heaven a hand, but they saw not the body, and then it came right to the vessel and took it, and the spear, and so bare it up to heaven. Since then was there never a man so hardy for to say that he had seen the Sangreal."

We turn instinctively to Tennyson for the poetisation of this incident. No one has worked on the legends so wondrously as he, no one has added more to their moral significance or to their mysticism. His paraphrase of the prose of Malory, his additions to the details, and his glorification of the vision, rank among the greatest triumphs of his peculiar art.

With what feelings is one likely to read his *Holy Grail*, and, standing near the broken and gleaming torrent of St. Knighton's Kieve, try to imagine that the marvellous quest which ended in Sarras began at this spot?

CHAPTER IX

OF CAMELFORD AND THE LAST BATTLE

“ O'er Cornwall's cliffs the tempest roar'd,
High the screaming sea-mew soar'd ;
On Tintagel's topmost tower
Darksome fell the sheeting shower ;
Round the rough Castle shrilly sung
The whirling blast, and wildly flung
On each tall rampart's thundering side
The surges of the tumbling tide :
When Arthur ranged his red cross ranks
On conscious Camlan's crimson banks.”

WHARTON, *The Grave of King Arthur*.

“ On Trinity Mondaye in the morne
This sore battayle was doomed to be ;
Where many a knight cry'd ‘ Well-a-waye !’
Alacke, it was the more pittie.”

Percy Reliques.

SHEER over the bleak Cornish hills, fifteen miles from Launceston, lies a small white-looking town with a precipitous highway along which the principal houses and one or two poor-looking public buildings are ranged. It is a town without a church, and, except on market day, without the signs of stirring life and business ; a remote and

isolated little place which nevertheless once had its own Parliamentary representative and not un-fittingly chose "Ossian" Macpherson as its member. This is Camelford, and the ride by coach from Launceston is not uninteresting or un-instructive. The desolate aspect of the land, the poverty-stricken appearance of the few tiny villages passed on the way, the barrenness of the hills, the scantness of the population, all serve to reveal the history, past and present, of this portion of England where only the hardiest of the race could live, and live somewhat precariously. The land itself yields little; there are no rivers upon which a boat could be used, and the line of rough hills which form the spine of the county pent the people as within a prison. Even now, Camelford and half a score of like places seem shut out of the world. The stream of life is sluggish, luxuries are scarcely known, the habits of the villagers are primitive, and yet the Cornishmen retain that rugged independence for which they have at all times been noted. In old times the county produced a race of heroes and giants who preserved their liberties and were among the last to be subdued by English rulers. Both modern and ancient history, legends and facts, bear testimony to the constant struggle which prevailed in

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this part, and had there been no "giants" in Cornwall, neither its traditions nor its history would be what they are. Queen Elizabeth said that the further she travelled west in her dominions the more convinced she was that the wise men came from the east. In a sense this was grossly unjust, for the Cornishmen, though they may have seemed a little uncouth, were by no means an uncultured race, and their literature proves how early they had their thinkers and their scholars, their bards and their chroniclers. Taciturnity on the part of this people need not be taken as a sign of unintelligence; rather is it proof to the contrary, for the Cornishman thinks for himself; he has his own opinions, and sturdily maintains them. A certain aloofness is discernible, and this is characteristic of a race which has so many claims to a distinct record of its own. In the character, bearing, and habits of the men of to-day may be found considerable corroboration of the truth which underlies the myths and legends of antiquity. If Camelford is now commonplace, with its market, its commercial inn, its linen-drappers', ironmongers', and greengrocers' shops, there may yet be found within and around it much to charm and much to kindle the enthusiasm of the lover of romance. Here and there are the

relics over which the antiquary gloats, and now and then a name is heard or seen which at once revives olden memories, or suggests with more or less distinctness a real connection with the last of the British race. It is not a little remarkable that while not a trace of the fourteenth century Charity Chapel remains, the sites of camps and the scenes of battles of much remoter date are still to be found. Signs of British occupation are not lacking, and one entrenchment known as Arthur's Hill takes us right back to the time of the great king. Mere names may, however, in most cases count for nought, and the fact that hills, tarns, and fords bear the classic designation and are reputed to have had connection with Arthurian deeds is not equivalent to tangible proof of the truth of the stories. Camelford is chiefly noted to-day for being the principal town within access of the slate quarries, and of being within easy and convenient distance of some of the most imposing and enchanting scenery of the north Cornwall coast. From a few points of vantage a glimpse of the sea may be caught, and the lanes branch off to famed Pentargon Bay, Trebarwith Strand, Black Pit, St. Knighton's Kieve, and Tintagel—all Arthurian haunts.

At the bottom of the hilly highway, beyond

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which stretch the meadows, one catches the first glimpse of the shallow little river, more properly called a brook, which, small and insignificant as it is, has become so prominently identified with the concluding scenes in King Arthur's history. This is the river which gives its name to the town, the Alan Camel, or Camlan (from *Crum hayle*, meaning "crooked river"), by the side of which the last battle is said to have been fought. It is a shallow stream and it has to find its way to the sea by a tortuous course between the hills which extend to the coast, a fact which the poet has not failed to turn to account, for Drayton wrote—

"Let Camel of her course and curious windings boast,

Her proper course that loosely doth
neglect,

As frantic, ever since her British Arthur's blood,
By Mordred's murderous hand was mingled with her
flood."

No one can look upon the Camel, and trace its rippling course between low banks until it passes beneath the dark stone arch of Slaughter Bridge, a mile or so distant, and feel that it is quite worthy of its fame. It is scarcely picturesque, and it needed a very daring and imaginative poet to speak of it as "frantic" or to make reference to its "flood." At its deepest one could wade

across it and not be wet above the ankles, but in most places there is no need to get wet at all, for a single stride would suffice to carry one from bank to bank. Nor does the little stream in its course pass through that part of the land which appeals most strongly to the imagination of the pilgrim. It runs sluggishly and muddily beneath the heavy-looking bridge, much too large for it, bearing an almost grotesquely terrible name in commemoration of the fearful battle which took place thereabout between King Arthur and his rebellious nephew. Where Slaughter Bridge—not by any means an ancient structure, by the way—crosses the Camlan Arthur is said to have received his death-wound, and to have given a fatal blow to Mordred. If we could only believe one-half that is told of Slaughter Bridge it would be veritably one of the most fascinating spots in all England, a Mecca for pilgrims and students, poets and romancists. But alas! Slaughter Bridge, despite its awe-inspiring name, is the greatest of illusions, and the most striking of proofs that the real land of King Arthur is lost or changed beyond all recognition. Never can we believe that this most insipid scene in all north Cornwall was the portion of Lyonesse where the last great battle in the west was fought, where Arthur met his doom,

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where the knights perished, and of all the great and noble company on either side only two knights survived to carry out their master's last behests.

But the tradition remains. Mordred had set his heart on the kingdom, and Arthur foresaw the end. "Never," says the chronicler, "was there seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land : for there was but rushing and riding, foining and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken either to other, and many a deadly stroke. But alway King Arthur rode throughout the battle of Sir Mordred many times, and did there right nobly as a noble King should do ; and at all times he never fainted. And Sir Mordred that day . . . put him in great peril, and thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold ground. And ever they fought still till it was nigh night, and by that time was there a hundred thousand laid dead upon the down. . . . ' Jesu mercy,' said King Arthur, ' where are all my noble knights become? Alas, that ever I should see this doleful day ; for now,' said King Arthur, ' I am come unto mine end.' Then was King Arthur aware where Sir Mordred leaned upon his sword among a great heap of dead men. ' Now give me my spear,' said King Arthur, ' for yonder I have spied the traitor which

hath wrought all this woe. . . . Betide me death, betide me life,' said the King, 'now I see him yonder alone, he shall never escape my hands.' Then King Arthur gat his spear in both his hands, and ran towards Sir Mordred, crying, 'Traitor, now is thy death-day come!' And when Sir Mordred heard King Arthur he ran unto him with his sword drawn in his hand, and there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a foin of his spear, throughout the body more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death-wound, he thrust himself with all the might that he had, up to the end of King Arthur's spear with his sword, that he held in both his hands, on the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain. And therewith Sir Mordred fell down stark dead to the earth, and the noble King Arthur fell down in a swoon to the earth. And Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere often-times heaved him up, and so weakly they laid him between them both, unto a little chapel, not far from the seaside." Historians differ widely as to the date of this event, but most are agreed that the time was winter—some say Christmas Day.

Mordred, Arthur's great opponent and eventual vanquisher, is the dark and sinister character, the

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man of mysterious origin and of blighting influence, moving gloomily through the drama. By some said to be Arthur's own son, a child of sin and crime, and by others said to be the son of King Lot and Arthur's sister, his life was miraculously preserved when the king ordered the slaying of all children born on May-day, in the hope of removing the infant who, as Merlin had prophesied to him, "shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm"; and thereafter he played a malignant part in the drama. If ill-news were to be borne to the king, Mordred bore it; were trust to be violated, Mordred violated it; were knights to be betrayed, Mordred was the spy and informer. Left to rule the land in Arthur's absence, he usurped the throne; left to guard Guinevere, he carried her away and attempted to force her in marriage; an outcast, he became Arthur's deadliest rival and fulfilled Merlin's prediction. It was he, and not the racial antagonist, who was destined to give the final blow to the Order that the king had established. Tennyson, following the suggestion of the chroniclers, has sharply contrasted Mordred with Lancelot, whose enemy he was, not so much because Lancelot was sinful, as because his sin gave him the opportunity of striking a blow against Arthur's favourite



Photo: R. Webber, Boscastle]

MOUTH OF ROCKY VALLEY AND LONG ISLAND, TINTAGEL

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knight. He was Lancelot's rival, too, his secret and cunning rival, for the love of Guinevere. All the pictures we have of Mordred are adverse; he is the "passing envious" man who hates all more successful than himself, the man who "laid his ear beside the doors," who was "always sullen"; the tale-bearer, whose narrow face and thin lips pictured the petty, spiteful spirit within; the man whose shield was blank and unblazoned, but who

" Like a subtle beast

Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
 Ready to spring, waiting a chance : for this
 He chill'd the popular praises of the King
 With silent smiles of slow disparagement ;
 And tampered with the Lords of the White Horse,
 Heathen, the brood by Hengist left ; and sought
 To make disruption in the Table Round
 Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
 Serving his traitorous end ; and all his aims
 Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot."

Such is Tennyson's portraiture of Mordred, and the depiction is justified by all that the chroniclers relate of the false knight who by fraud gathered the knights around him, caused himself to be crowned at Canterbury, and at Winchester declared that Guinevere should be his wife. The chronicle explicitly declares that the queen repelled his advances, and flying to London, took refuge in the Tower, which she garnished with her

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army. Sir Mordred, "wroth out of measure," laid siege to the Tower, defied the Archbishop, and at length, by spreading evil reports of King Arthur, drew "much people" to his side. This defection supplied Malory with a fine opportunity for moralising on the defaults of Englishmen, who are seldom satisfied—"for there may no thing please us no term." When King Arthur arrived off Dover with a great navy of ships, galleys, and carracks, he found Mordred and his host awaiting him. Here the first encounter took place, and Mordred, being worsted, removed to Barham Down, where he again suffered defeat. But these skirmishes, desperate as they were, were but preliminaries to the real battle for which both sides were preparing. Mordred's force was drawn from those "that loved not Lancelot," and from the people "of London, Kent, Southsex, Surrey, Estsex, Southfolk, and Northfolk"; and Arthur, with his faithful band, moved westward past Salisbury, and on to the shore. Despite the warning of Sir Gawaine's ghost "in no wise to do battle," but to make a month's treaty in order to profit by the presence of Lancelot, King Arthur found himself compelled to engage in the contest. A fair and generous offer had been made to Mordred: Cornwall and Kent were to be his during

King Arthur's lifetime, and on the king's death he was to have "all England." But when the treaty was made an adder stung a knight's foot, and his cry of pain was like a clarion call to battle. In a moment the swords flashed, the trumpets were blown, the horns sounded; and at sunset Mordred was dead, and Arthur had received his death-wound.*

Undeniably the most picturesque and romantic portion of the river Camlan is about half a mile away from Slaughter Bridge, towards Tintagel, where it has worn a way between the grassy hills and lies half-hidden far below, crossed and re-crossed scores of times by fallen and inclining trees. The waters here hurry and chatter about

* The ancient ballad, discovered, annotated, and to, a slight extent supplemented, by Dr. Percy, follows very exactly the story of Arthur's last days as given in the romances except that it ascribes to Sir Lucan the acts usually credited to Sir Bedivere. Not a detail is omitted, not a point is missed. On the morning of Trinity Monday the ghost of Sir Gawaine is said to have appeared to the king and warned him not to fight if he prized his life, but to wait until Sir Lancelot returned from France. The parley which followed between Arthur and Mordred is next described, but just as a month's league had been decided upon the adder's sting brought about the "woeful chance As ever was in Christentie." When the wounded knight drew his sword the two hosts immediately "joined battayle," and fought until only three men were left alive.

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the stones, and find their way about the rank weeds and undergrowth which here and there impede their journey. It is with some difficulty that the river is found at all, and with greater difficulty that it is approached. But those who persevere will find, where the banks are steepest and the herbage and weeds thickest, that the brook washes a huge engraved stone lying flat and half embedded in the earth. This is King Arthur's grave, a secret place, and so near Tintagel that the poet did not strain facts greatly when he pointed out that

“ No other place on Britain's spacious earth

Were worthy of his end but where he had his birth.”

Pilgrims find their way to that lonely spot, and resting near the huge stone, they may reflect at will upon the wondrous possibility of there being, after all, by the side of this stream, a tangible link with King Arthur. The stone lies in a nook between two rocks, and three graceful and luxurious trees watch over it as if they were the metamorphosed three Queens who received the wounded king in the magic boat which glided to Avalon. All around is a profound calm; not a sound but the occasional buzz of an insect comes from the long grasses of the meadows above, or from the ferns and ivy which spring from the

shady channel below. At sunset the scene is delightful. The high meadows are kindled with brilliant light, but not a ray comes to that hollow where, it is said, Arthur was laid. His grave is in perpetual shadow, and when I last saw it a long, gaunt, withered branch stretched over it like a spectral arm. The edacious tooth of time has bitten away the letters, and moss has overgrown a portion of the stone, so that the inscription is barely decipherable, but the words are known to be—

“Cotin hic jacit filius Magari.”

The actual history is best given in the words of the local antiquary Borlase, who in his noted 1769 volume gave an illustration of the relics and said—

“This inscribed stone, nine feet nine inches long, and two feet three inches wide, was formerly a foot-bridge near the late Lord Falmouth’s seat of Worthyvale, about a mile and a half from Camelford. It was called Slaughter Bridge, and as Tradition says, from a bloody battle fought on this ground, fatal to the great King Arthur. A few years since, the late Lady Dowager Falmouth, shaping a rough kind of hill, about 100 yards off, into spiral walks, removed this stone from the place where it served as a bridge, and, building

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a low piece of masonry for its support, placed it at the foot of her improvements, where it still lies in one of the natural grots of the hill. This stone is taken notice of by Mr. Carew in the following words : ‘ For testimony of the last battle in which Arthur was killed, the old folks thereabouts (viz., round Camelford) show you a stone bearing Arthur’s name, though now departed to “Atry.” This inscription has been lately published; but so incorrectly that it may still be reckoned among the nondescripts. It is said there, “that this stone lay at the very place where Arthur received his mortal wound.” All this about King Arthur takes its rise from the last five letters of this Inscription, which are by some thought to be *Maguri* (*quasi magni Arthuri*), and from thence others will have it, that a son of Arthur was buried here; but though history, as well as tradition, affirms that Arthur fought his last battle, in which he was mortally wounded, near this place, yet that this Inscription retains anything of his name is all a mistake. The letters are Roman, and as follow : *Cotin hic jacit filius magari*. By the *i* in *hic* being joined to the *h*, by the *h* wanting its cross link, the bad line of the writing, the distorted leaning of the letters, I conclude, that the monument cannot be so ancient as the time

of Arthur.' " It seems quite clear that what is now called King Arthur's tombstone was originally called, when in position, Slaughter Bridge, a name which has been transferred to the modern structure. That the stone once served actually as a funeral monument is also pretty obvious, but whom it commemorates is a mystery. The engraved letters belong to an era posterior to Arthur, and there are, as a fact, relics indubitably of an earlier date in the locality.

"Graves" of King Arthur are so numerous as to make all claims more or less ridiculous. Even Camelford, as if fearing that the evidence in one case may not be strong enough, provides an alternative, and points out that near at hand is Warbelow Barrow, an ancient fortification of considerable extent, in the centre of which is a large mound reputed also to be King Arthur's burying-place. It would be easy to reduce the whole subject to absurdity by saying that if there were a doubt that King Arthur ever lived, his numerous "graves" conclusively prove that he died many times, despite the tradition, too, that he did not die at all. The jumble of foolishness and contradictions does not of course affect the real story; it is the resultant of popular superstitions and confusing traditions. Upon the smallest basis of

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ancient fact superstition rears a stupendous edifice, and these many claims to possess King Arthur's "grave" arise from the eagerness of a people to support the idea of their direct connection with a lost hero, and from their readiness to attach his name to those places which naturally suggest a possible or a poetic connection. That a very strong and sincere belief exists that Arthur was buried near Camelford is, however, not to be questioned, and there is perhaps a better reason for conceding the point in this case than in all the others. All traditions agree that the last battle was fought in the vicinity and that it was fatal to Arthur, and his burial close at hand is the most natural of conclusions. Mr. King, an antiquary, declared that on the bank of the Camlan could be seen "a fallen maen of the later British era, having the name of Arthur inscribed on its lower side," but this seems to have been conjecture rather than established proof. Yet it is flying in the face of the most cherished of beliefs to admit that any grave of Arthur exists—to say nothing of a multitude of them. If he passed into the land of Faerie, if he did not die but only awaits a call to "come again," why do we expect to find the place of his sepulture?—why are tombs discovered?—why are lovely spots

called King Arthur's graves? What said the ancient triad?—

“The grave of March is this, and this is the grave of Gwyther,
Here is the grave of Gwgawn Glededyfrudd,
But unknown is the grave of Arthur.”

The more popular and more befitting tradition deviates entirely from any commonplace termination of King Arthur's career, and gives a magical end to his miraculous history. The king's brand, Excalibur or Calibur, the emblem of his kingship and the symbol of his power, the sword which he alone could wield, and by winning which he had gained his crown, was given to Sir Bedivere by the dying chief to return unto the Lady of the Lake. “My time hieth fast,” said the king; “therefore take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it unto yonder waterside, and when thou comest there I charge thee, throw my sword into that water, and come again and tell me what thou shalt see.” Twice did Sir Bedivere falteringly go to dark Dozmare Pool, a melancholy sheet of water overshadowed by high and dreary hills which seem to keep gloomy watch over Camelford. Twice did Sir Bedivere's heart fail him, and instead of flinging the wondrous sword into the depths, supposed to be unfathomable, of

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the black lake, he hid it among the many-knotted waterflags that whistled stiff and dry about the marge. "Authority forgets a dying King," said Arthur to the faithless knight; but for the last time asserting his power, he threateningly bade him to fulfil his task; and the knight ran, leapt down the ridges, and threw the splendid brand into mid-water.

" But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere." *

Poets, in describing this scene, have found it scarcely possible to do other than follow closely the words of Malory, which relate the incident with directness and yet with a charm of picturesqueness scarcely to be surpassed except by much elaboration—and elaboration would be out of place in such a case, and would destroy the subtle effect

* It is interesting to compare Tennyson's lines with Longfellow's in *The Spanish Student*, the similarity of phrasing being so marked. Victorian, the student, observes that it is in vain he throws unto oblivion's sea the sword [of love] that pierces him—

" For like Excalibur,
With gemmed and flashing hilt it will not sink.
There rises from below a hand that grasps it,
And waves it in the air : and wailing voices
Are heard along the shore."

of the narrative. After telling of the hiding of the sword by the reluctant knight, and of Arthur's indignation at his evasive words and long tarrying, the chronicler says:—"Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might, and there came an arm and a hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished it, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water." "The hand that arose from the mere," says Renan, "is the hope of the Celtic heroes. It is thus that weak people, dowered with imagination, revenge themselves on their conquerors. Feeling themselves to be strong inwardly and weak outwardly, they protest, they exult, and such a strife unloosing their might renders them capable of miracles."

Four miles to the east of Camelford is Row Tor, 1,296 feet high, its sharp spine, broken and projecting in parts, no doubt suggesting the name it popularly bears of the Rough Mountain. On the left is Rame Head, another typical hill, bare and brown, and it is between these two that Dozmare Pool, the reputed scene of the incident with the sword and the magic hand, may be seen dimly

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glittering. It is a weird legend-haunted spot. The traveller finds himself shut in between the frowning hills and beside a dark tarn of most dismal aspect. It has been supposed that the waters of Dozmare Pool were once tidal, and from this supposition the name is derived, *dos* meaning a drop, and *mari* the sea. Instead of being unfathomable, however, the pool is now only a few feet deep, though its black appearance certainly suggests a great depth. This and all other superstitions have probably been suggested by its gloom and desolation, by its situation among the dreariest of hills, and by tragic events for which there is some historic foundation and which occurred in the vicinity. The wraith of the place is one Tregeagle, an unjust and tyrannical man of yore, who in expiation of his many sins is doomed to visit Dozmare Pool, where amid the terrific storms on the hills and moors during winter his piteous howling can be distinctly heard. His punishment is to empty the pool with a limpet shell, and it may be due to his labours that the waters have so considerably diminished in bulk since the time that they were "unfathomable." But Tregeagle loudly mourns because he considers his task a hopeless one, and then the Evil Power comes in person and pursues him round and round

the dismal tarn until at last Tregeagle flies shrieking to the sanctuary at Roche Rocks, fifteen miles distant. This is the tale told of the "middle meer" in which Excalibur was flung and lost to mortal sight for ever.

Such is Camelford; such are some of the traditions which make it alluring to the pilgrim. Leland was convinced that here the "British Hector" was slain, and Stow in his *Chronicle* affirmed that "after many encounters in which Arthur had always the advantage, the two parties came to a decisive action at Camblan, on the River Camalan, in Cornwall, near the place of Arthur's birth." These specific details leave no doubt as to the place meant. But Stow did not believe the last battle occurred in the winter season. He declares that Arthur survived his wounds "a few days," and died on May 25th, in the year 542, at Glastonbury, to which shrine the pilgrims should last repair. From Camelford in Cornwall, therefore, we pass to the most mysterious region of all, the legendary and haunted Vale of Avalon.

CHAPTER X

OF GLASTONBURY AND THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

“And so they rowed from the land; and Sir Bedivere beheld all the ladies go with him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, Ah my Lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies? Comfort thyself, said the King. For I will go into the vale of Avilon, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou never more hear of me, pray for my soul.”—*Malory*.

“Whether the Kinge were there or not,
Hee never knewe, nor ever colde,
For from that sad and direful daye
Hee never more was seene on molde.”

Percy Reliques.

“O, three times favoured isle, where’s the place that
might
Be with thyself compared for glory or delight
Whilst Glastonbury stood? . . .
Not great Arthur’s tomb, nor holy Joseph’s grave,
From sacrilege had power their sacred bones to save,
He, who that God in man to his sepulchre brought,
Or he, which for the faith twelve famous battles
fought.”—*Drayton*.

A QUAIN old-world look is upon the face of the city of many legends, King Arthur’s “isle of rest.” It lies deep in a green well-watered valley,

and its steep sudden hill, the Tor, rising abruptly to a height of over five hundred feet and crowned with a lonely square tower, seems to shelter and keep watch upon the traditional apple-island. The orchard lawns are seen everywhere with their deep-green carpet and the crooked branches of innumerable fruit-laden trees casting grotesque shadows upon it. The whole year round the western airs are balmy, though in spite of hoary legend and poetic eulogy Glastonbury has felt the effects of terrific storms, whirlwinds, and earthquakes. Its history—a history of marvel and wonder, inextricably mingled for many centuries with superstition—takes us far back into the misty past when the ancient Britons named the marshland, often flooded by the water of the Bristol Channel, Ynyswytryn, or Inis vitrea, the Glassy Island; either, it has been surmised, on account of the “glasten” or blue-green colour of its surface, or from the abundance of “glass” (or woad) to be found in the vicinity.* On the

* Glastonbury occupies a former site of Druidical worship, and Professor Rhys believes the name to be a corruption of the British word *glasten*, an oak, the Druids cultivating both the oak and the apple as foster parents of their sacred mistletoe. Glesténaburh, says Canon Taylor, was assimilated by the Saxons to their gentile form Gles-tinga-burh or Glæsting-burh, which being supposed by a

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other hand Professor Freeman believed that Glastonbury was the abode and perhaps the possession of one Glæsting, who, on discovering that his cattle strayed to the rich pastures, settled in that part, which in the natural order of things became Glæstingaburgh. That it was veritably an island admits of no doubt; the circuit of the water can still be traced; and when the Romans in turn made discovery of the fruitfulness of the region enclosed by the waters of the western sea, they denominated it *Insula Avalonia*, or Isle of Apples. This was the "fortunate isle," celebrated in the ancient ode of which Camden has given us a version, "where unforced fruits and willing comforts meet," where the fields require "no rustic hand" but only Nature's cultivation, where

"The fertile plains with corn and herds are proud,
And golden apples shine in every wood."

The inflowing of the sea made islands not only of Glastonbury, but of Athelney, Beckery, and Meare; and not many centuries ago, when a tempest raged, the sea-wall was broken down and the Channel waters swept up the low-lying land almost as far as Glastonbury Church. The simple

false etymology to mean the "shining" or "glassy" town was mistranslated by the Welsh as *Ynys-Widrin*, the Island of Glass.



ST. MICHAEL'S TOWER, GLASTONBURY

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record of this event reads: "The breach of the sea-flood was January 20th, 1606." Again in 1703 was Glastonbury threatened with a deluge, and the water was five feet deep in its streets; but as geologists are able to affirm that the sea is receding from the western coast it is unlikely that such catastrophes will recur. A little lazy stream, the Brue, almost engirdles the city, and thus permits the inhabitants with seeming reasonableness to retain for Glastonbury the name loved best—the Isle of Avalon. That Roman name has been full of dreamy suggestiveness to the poet's mind; and though the poet's Avalon may often have been an enchanted city, the "baseless fabric of a vision," the Avalon of Somerset, with its two streets forming a perfect cross, its Abbey ruins, its antiquities, and its slumbrous aspect, is assuredly not unworthy of the legends clustering about it.

Only by devious paths can Glastonbury, once the remote shrine for devout pilgrims from all parts of the land, be reached, for it is still somewhat out of the common track. But to wander awhile in the apple-country is delightful alike to the mind and the physical sense—to drink in its associations, to inhale its warm, sweet air, to see the gleam of white blossoms and the crimson

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softening upon the round ripened cheeks of the pendent fruit, these are the sources of enjoyment and the elements of the charm. Countless gardens send forth a rare perfume, and the quiet of the whole city in the midst of orchards and streams and showing the relics of by-gone splendour has a lulling effect upon the traveller who comes from the roaring town and the busy mart. When the twin dark towers of Wells Cathedral are fading shadow-like in the distance the new strange picture of the island-valley is revealed. There stretch the long level meadows of deep emerald, there glooms a forest of trees whose twisted branches are bright with apple-blossoms. The high Tor hill looks stern and bare, but cosy and inviting is the town below with its rows of irregular houses, many of which date back to long past days, while others, constituted of stone with which the architects of Dunstan's and of Becket's time wrought, seem to bear mute tribute to the famous era when the Abbey was in its glory and reverend pilgrims from afar came to bring oblations to that hallowed shrine. To-day the visitor finds a welcome at the "Inne" built in 1475 for the devout travellers whom the Abbot could not accommodate within the walls of the Abbey; and so few are the changes of time that the lofty

façade, the parapet and turrets, the wide archway, the ecclesiastical windows, and the long corridors, remain almost as they were first designed and made. Side by side stand "Ye Olde Pilgrim's Inne" and the Tribunal, or Court House, built by Abbot Beere, for the trial of petty offenders against the law. Unexplored dungeons are reported to exist underground, together with subterranean passages communicating with the Abbey from the "Inne" and the Tribunal. In the neighbourhood is a conspicuous building once used for collecting the tithes, called the Abbey Barn, dating from 1420, in some respects the best preserved of all the ancient memorials. But the pride and glory of Glastonbury centre in the wondrously beautiful remains of the oldest, richest, and stateliest of English Abbeys—an Abbey whose reputed founder was Joseph of Arimathæa, that Joseph who had seen the face and heard the voice of the Saviour of mankind. It was the only church of first rank in England standing as a monument of British days which escaped the scath and wreck which followed the storm of Norman conquest.

To what dim epoch the earliest history of Glastonbury belongs is more or less conjectural, though the discovery of some sixty low mounds

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by archæologists led to the discovery that a pre-historic lake-village in remote times occupied the site. Excavations revealed the remains of human habitations and of successive occupation by the same race—a race which hunted the boar, the roebuck, and the deer, and whose sole accomplishment was the making of coarse, rude pottery. But this people has passed away and not even a tradition of its existence is extant. It was at a much later period, though, looking backward, the time seems far distant, that the first legend of Glastonbury took root and flowered. So pure, fragrant, and beautiful is that treasured blossom that it would seem ruthless to attempt to pluck it by the roots from the ground, and to cast it aside as a worthless weed of ignorance and superstition. It brings to us the memory of that time when the Son of Man was on earth; it is a seed blown from that land which His presence sanctified. Nearly two thousand years ago the crucified Nazarene was watched by agonised crowds upon Calvary. Joseph of Arimathæa, “a good man and a just,” begged the dead body from Pilate and buried it in his own garden, thereby incurring the fierce resentment of the Jews. He fled from Palestine, fearing for his life, and so enraged were his enemies at his



THE OLDE PILGRIM'S INN, GLASTONBURY

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escape that they expelled his friends also—Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and Philip among others—putting them out to sea without oars or sail. “After tossing about many days,” says one writer, “they were driven in God’s providence to Marseilles, and from Marseilles St. Joseph came to Britain, where he died at a good old age, after having preached the Gospel of Christ with power and earnestness for many years.” This was about A.D. 63. “The happy news of the Saviour’s resurrection, and the offer of the only assured means of salvation to all who would embrace it” were welcomed by King Arviragus, who assigned to St. Joseph the Isle of Avalon as a retreat. When Joseph and his little Christian band, passing over Stone Down where stand the two notable Avalon Oaks, came to the place, weary with long travelling, they rested on the ridge of a hill, which in its name of Weary-all Hill (really Worall) is supposed to commemorate this incident; and where the saint’s staff touched the sod, a thorn tree miraculously sprang up, and every Christmas Day it buds and blossoms as a memorial of our Lord, and of the first Christian festival.* Another story says that the saint was

* William Morris slightly varied the story in his *King Arthur’s Tomb*, when he represents Lancelot journeying

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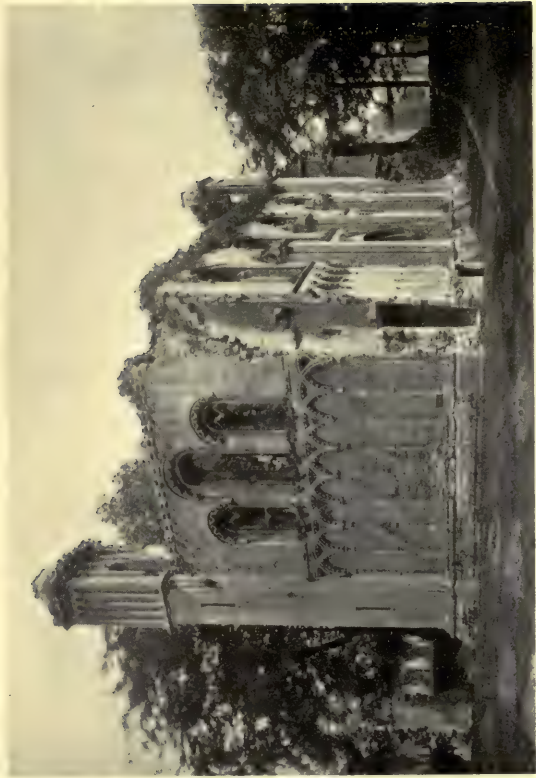
met by a boisterous mob of the heathen, and that, planting his pilgrim's staff in the earth, he knelt down to pray; and as he prayed, the hard, dry staff began to bud and give forth fragrance, and became a living tree. Then said Joseph, "Our God is with us," and the heathen, transfixed by the miracle, were convinced and pacified. So runs the earliest Christian legend in England, and as a fitting sequel we learn that not long after Joseph's mission had begun the first Christian chapel was built, and occupied part of the site on which the most beautiful of holy houses was afterwards reared—Glastonbury Abbey. St. Joseph's Chapel, magnificent in ruin, is one of those hallowed places in which one might spend hours in silent contemplation. Through many centuries the legend of the Holy Thorn has been preserved, and Glastonbury has remained distinguished by the fact that there the "winter thorn" has blossomed every Christmas "mindful of our Lord," or, as a pupil of Caxton's wrote in 1520—

to "where the Glastonbury glided towers shine" and relates that

" Presently

He rode on giddy still, until he reach'd
A place of apple-trees, by the Thorn-Tree

Wherefrom St. Joseph in the past days preach'd."



ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL, GLASTONBURY ABBEY

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“The hawthornes also that groweth in Werall
Do burge and bere green leaves at Christmas
As fresh as other in May.”

The tree was regarded with great awe and superstition by the inhabitants, and when the change in the calendar was made they looked to the “*sacra spina*” for confirmation of the righteousness of what had been done. Many people refused to celebrate the new-style Christmas Day because the Thorn showed no blossoms, and when the white flowers appeared on January 5th, the old-style Christmas was held to have been divinely sanctioned. A trunk of the tree was cut down by a Puritan soldier, though his sacrilege caused him to be severely wounded by a piece of the dismembered tree striking him; but when the Thorn was cast into the river as dead and worthless it miraculously took root again. The spot where it grew is marked by a monumental stone bearing the inscription:—I. A. A.D. XXXI.

A Somerset historian likewise records that in addition to the Holy Thorn there grew in the Abbey churchyard a miraculous walnut tree, which never budded forth before the feast of St. Barnabas, namely, the 11th of June, and “on that day shot forth leaves and flourished like its usual species.” This tree is gone, but another “of the

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commonplace sort" stands in its place. "It is strange," we read, "to say how much this tree was sought after by the credulous; and though not an uncommon walnut, Queen Anne, King James, and many of the nobility of the realm, even when the times of monkish superstition had ceased, gave large sums of money for small cuttings from the original." The walnut tree, however, never vied with the Holy Thorn in popularity. The "Athenian Oracle" (1690) wriggled out of the difficulties attending a belief in the budding of the hawthorn tree with characteristic ingenuity, and supplied an example that most of us would gladly imitate. To an inquirer who asked for information and an opinion, the "Oracle" replied (none too grammatically), "All that Mr. Camden says of it is, that if any one may be believed in matters of this nature, this has been affirmed to him to be true by several credible persons; it was not in Glastonbury itself, but in Wirral Park, hard by it; however, this superstitious tree, true or false, was cut down in the last reforming age, though it seems they did not make such root and branch work with it but that some stumps remained, at least some branches or grafts out of it were saved, and still growing in the same country; though whether

they have the same virtue with the former, or that had any more than any other hawthorn, we don't pretend to determine any more than the fore-mentioned historian." The belief in the tree and the knowledge of its peculiar properties were so wide-spread that Sedley's verse on Cornelia, who "bloomed in the winter of her days like Glastonbury Thorn" was easily understood. Bishop Goodman, writing to the Lord General Oliver Cromwell in 1652, said he could "find no naturall cause" either in the soil or other circumstances for the extraordinary character of the tree. "This I know," said the prelate, "that God first appeared to Moses in a bramble bush; and that Aaron's rod, being dried and withered, did budde; and these were God's actions, and His first actions; and, truly, Glastonbury was a place noted for holiness, and the first religious foundation in England, and, in effect, was the first dissolved; and therein, was such a barbarous inhumanity as Egypt never heard the like. It may well be that this White Thorne did then spring up, and began to blossome on Christmas day, to give a testimony to religion, and that it doth flourish in persecution," and so forth. Infinite meanings and significances could be extracted from the legend, that fantastic casket of man's art and devising which is made to en-

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shrine the small pure pearl of truth. If this were the place for sermons it might be pointed out that the vitality of the Thorn is an emblem of the vitality of the religion it commemorates; but our duty is to trace its connection with history. The legend has been somewhat altered in form in order to bring it into direct association with the building of the Abbey. This new version of the miracle is that Joseph of Arimathæa was commanded to build a church in honour of the Virgin Mary, but finding that the natives were distrustful of him and his mission he prayed, like Gideon, for a miracle. Forthwith his staff began to shoot forth leaves and blossoms, and the unwithered Thorn took root. Be that as it may, the first Christians built a chapel of twisted alder, in the form of a parallelogram, 60 feet long and 26 feet broad (to come to details), and having "a window at the west end and one at the east; on each side were three windows, and near the western angle was a door each side." A representation of the first building for Christian worship erected in this country is found on an old document now in the British Museum, and it is said to have been copied from a plate of brass which had been affixed to an adjoining pillar. The chapel is variously referred to in ancient records as

“Ligneæ Basilica,” “Vetusta Ecclesia,” and the “Ealdechirche,” and with its walls of wattles and its roof of rushes it must long have been an object of revered contemplation. Joseph built and preached in “the little lonely church,” “built with wattles from the marsh,” journeying from thence across the plain to the Mendips, where he found other half barbarous Britons to listen to the story of the Redemption. He laid the foundations of a bishopric at Wells, which was afterwards to be the rival of Glastonbury Abbey itself, and to the end of a long and fruitful life continued his ministry to the people.

Chalice Hill revives by its name and associations another reminiscence of our Lord even more amazing. St. Joseph was the bringer to this country of two precious relics—one—

“The Cup itself from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with His own,”

the other, some of the blood which oozed from the crucified Saviour’s body. The chalice, or sacred cup, was buried by Joseph at the spot where a perpetual spring of water bubbles—the “Blood Spring,” which supplies the Holy Well, scene of many miraculous cures in times past. That the waters are medicinal admits of no doubt; that it issues from the Cup is a matter of faith,

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especially as the Holy Grail is claimed to be now in safe keeping by more than one far-distant Abbey.* As for the second relic, it is said that St. Joseph confided the memorial to his nephew Isaac, who sealed up the blood in two vials and secreted them from the invading Roman pagans. When danger menaced him, he hid the phials in an ancient fig-tree, which he then cast into the sea. Carried by the waves to Gaul, the fig-tree was cast up at the spot which now forms Fécamp harbour; and there a few centuries later it was found with the two phials secure. Fearless Duke Richard of Normandy was so impressed by the discovery that he built an Abbey in which fitly to enshrine the Precious Blood, and Fécamp Abbey bears witness alike to his faith and his devotion. It was upon the story of the Grail that chroniclers seized with avidity after Borron had once shown its capabilities—a story now believed by many to be almost wholly of Celtic origin, the Sancgreal being none other than Fionn's healing cup. Mr. Nutt, to whose exhaustive work on the subject reference has previously been made, has told

* The Holy Grail is pointed out in particular at Genoa Cathedral. "It was brought from Cæsarea in 1101, is a hexagonal dish of two palms' width, and was long supposed to be of real emerald, which it resembles in colour and brilliancy."

us of every form, rudimentary and developed, in which the Grail legend has appeared, and of every explanation advanced as to its meaning. Whether the legend is based upon Christian canonical or uncanonical writings, or whether it is an ancient saga into which a Christian element was imported, whether it was extant in any definite form before the time of Robert de Borron, or whether it was a fabrication of the era to which many monkish fables have been traced, are points which to discuss in detail would require, and have had, volumes devoted to them. Within fifty years (1180-1225) there were eight versions of the story in which the idea of the Grail was elaborated, and we know how the idea has been developed and enriched and idealised until our own time. "The vanished Vase of Heaven that held like Christ's own Heart an Hin of Blood," has been a marvellously fecund seed of inspiration to romancist and poet. Percival and Galahad are the highest human conceptions of purity, and their quest is the most exalting and ennobling upon which heroes can set forth. Yet, as we have already seen, the conclusion cannot be resisted that the story had its root in paganism, and that the history of the Grail is nothing but the history of the gradual transformation of old Celtic folk-

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tales into a poem charged with Christian symbolism and mysticism. "This transformation, at first the inevitable outcome of its pre-Christian development, was hastened later by the perception that it was a fitting vehicle for certain moral and spiritual ideas." Avalon, lying not far from the western sea beyond which tradition said were the happy isles of the blessed dead, was the Cymric equivalent for the Celtic paradise, and thus did Glastonbury become associated with the glorious legends which have made it in the eyes of the romancists the most sacred and wondrous city of earth. So may Glastonbury truly be said to gather round it "all the noblest memories alike of the older and the newer dwellers in the land." Nor is it surprising that in a place of so much reputation modern marvels should be reported to occur or wonderful discoveries be made. An elixir was found in the ruins of the Abbey in 1586, one grain of which, being dropped upon an ounce and a quarter of mercury, was found to transmute the mercury into an ounce of pure gold. Another grain of it, dropped upon a piece of metal cut out of a warming-pan, turned the metal into silver, and this with the warming-pan was sent to Queen Elizabeth that she might "fit the piece with the place where it was cut out."

Such facts are worthy of being related at some length not only on account of any curious interest they possess in themselves, but because they enable us to understand a number of allusions in the Arthurian story, and help to account for the selection of Glastonbury as the scene of the most solemn episodes in the career of the British king and his knights. The poet Spenser, in recording that Sir Lucius was the first to receive "the sacred pledge of Christ's evangely," hastens to recall the Glastonbury legend, and to explain that—

" Long before that day
Hither came Joseph of Arithmathy,
Who brought with him the Holy Grayle, they say,
And preacht the truth."

All the chief points in the old beliefs and the myths and traditions are caught up in Malory's history. The account of Joseph and his coming to England may be read in the Book of Sir Galahad, for the story was told by the stainless knight who bore the marvellous shield—

" Sir," said Sir Galahad, " by this shield beene full many mervailles." " Sir," said the knight, " it befell after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ thirtie yeare, that Joseph of Aramathy, the gentle knight, that tooke downe our Lord from the crosse, and at that time hee departed from Jerusalem with a great part of the kindred with him, and so they laboured till they came to a citie that hight Sarras. And at that same houre that Joseph came unto Sarras

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there was a king that hight Evelake, that had great warre against the Sarasins, and in especial against one Sarasin, the which was King Evelake's cosin, a rich king and a mighty, the which marched nigh this land, and his name was called Tollome le Feintes. So, upon a day these two met to doe battaile. Then Joseph, the son of Joseph of Aramathy, went unto King Evelake, and told him that he would be discomfited and slaine but if he left his beleeve of the ould law and beleeve upon the new law. And then he shewed him the right beleeve of the Holy Trinity, the which he agreed with al his hart, and ther this shield was made for King Evelake, in the name of him that died upon the crosse; and then through his good beleeve hee had the better of King Tollome. For when King Evelake was in the battaile, there was a cloath set afore the shield, and when hee was in the greatest perill hee let put away the cloath, and then anon his enemies saw a figure of a man upon the crosse, where through they were discomforted. And so it befell that a man of King Evelake's had his hand smitten off, and beare his hand in his other hand, and Joseph called that man unto him, and bad him goe with good devotion and touch the crosse; and as soon as that man had touched the crosse with his hand, it was as whole as ever it was before. Then soone after there fell a great mervaile, that the crosse of the shield at one time vanished away that no man wist where it became. And there was King Evelake baptised, and for the most part all the people of that cittie. So soone after Joseph would depart, and King Evelake would go with him whether he would go or not; and so by fortune they came into this land, which at that time was called Great Brittain, and there they found a great felon panim that put Joseph in prison. And so by fortune tidings came unto a worthy man that hight Mondrames, and hee assembled all his people, for the great renown that he had hard of Joseph; and so he came into the land of Great Brittain, and disherited the felon panim

and consumed him, and therewith delivered Joseph out of prison. And after that, all the people were turned to the Christian faith."

According to Malory it was "Not long after that," that Joseph was "laid in his death bed," his last act being to make "a crosse of his owne blood" upon the shield before giving it to King Evelake. "Now may yee see a remembrance that I love you," he said, "for yee shall never see this shield but that yee shall thinke on mee, and it shall be alwayes as fresh as it is now. And never shall no man beare this shielde about his necke but hee shall repent it, unto the time that Sir Galahad the good knight beare it." It is the general opinion that Joseph of Arimathæa was buried in the ground surrounding the church of his foundation, for a burial ground to contain a thousand graves had been prepared in his time. William of Malmesbury wrote that there were preserved in that consecrated place "the remains of many saints, nor is there any space in the building that is free of their ashes. So much so that the stone pavement, and indeed the sides of the altar itself, above and below, is crammed with the multitude of the relics. Rightly, therefore, it is called the heavenly sanctuary on earth, of so large a number of saints it is the repository." There is no clear record of who immediately suc-

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ceeded Joseph, but his ministry was carried on by St. Patrick, who was a native of Glastonbury,* by St. David, by Gildas, and by Dunstan. It was St. Patrick who, returning from his labours in Ireland in 461, found that the church built with wattles from the marsh was in a state of decay, and erected a substantial edifice on Tor Hill, dedicated to St. Mary and St. Michael. He was Glastonbury's first abbot, though this fact is traditionary rather than historical, and his grave was near the altar of the original church. An oratory had previously existed on the site, having been founded a century after Joseph's arrival by two saints, Phaganus and Duruvianus. The Abbey itself now began to take definite shape, the eyes of all Christians being drawn to Glastonbury by reason of its sacred record. In the sixth century, in King Arthur's time, it was approaching its fulness of power and nearing that zenith of fame and splendour which did not decline for nearly a thousand years.

According to Professor Freeman, Glastonbury became, in the year 601, the great sanctuary of

* Some historians, perhaps with better reason, declare that he was born in 405 at Kilpatrick, Dumbarton, a little town at the junction of the Leven and Clyde. He is variously reported to have died in 493 and 507, some placing his age at 88, and others at 120.



WELLS CATHEDRAL

the British in the place of Ambresbury, which had but lately fallen. How it grew, how it was ruled by great leaders in the church, how it became the largest, the most beautiful, the most wealthy of all abbeys, how its fall was compassed, and how the last of its abbots, an aged man, was dragged to the hill-top and hanged, are historic facts which belong to a date far later than that with which we are concerned. We cannot even dwell upon St. Patrick's sojourn at Glastonbury, or upon Dunstan's retirement to its cloisters in order to devote himself to study and music. Here it was that he wrestled with the Evil One in person while labouring at his forge; here it was that heavenly visions were vouchsafed to him; here it was that he began his work of reformation in the Church and made the Abbey the centre of religious influence in the kingdom. After the lapse of centuries we gaze only upon the ruins of the fabric, and from them learn how majestic the temple in its prime must have been, comprehending a little of the truth half revealed and half concealed in the silent storied places with their shattered walls, their crumbling archways, their unroofed chambers, their windows darkened with trailing weeds, and their floors overgrown with lank grasses and moss.

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King Arthur's connection with Glastonbury cannot be deemed wholly mythical, though the mysteriously beautiful narrative which tells of his last days in Avalon seems too poetical for reality. There are, however, other links, not so generally recognised, connecting him with this consecrated place. Glastonbury was not only his "isle of rest;" nor was the Abbey known only to him as a shrine. He claimed, or it was claimed for him, that he was descended on his mother's side from Joseph of Arimathæa, the genealogy being thus given:—"Helianis, the nephew of Joseph, begat Joshua; Joshua begat Aminadab; Aminadab begat Castellus; Castellus begat Mavael; Mavael begat Lambord, who begat Igerna of whom Uther Pendragon begat the famous and noble Arthur." Glastonbury, in addition to its celebrity as a Christian sanctuary, would therefore have a claim upon King Arthur's attention for the sake of his venerated ancestor, though there seems little reason to doubt that in his day it was the cynosure of the eyes of all who claimed to be within the religious fold. Lady Charlotte Guest, in one of the valuable notes to her translation of the *Mabinogion*, calls attention to a record of William of Malmesbury, which proves how much Glastonbury was in King Arthur's mind on all occasions.

“It is written in the Acts of the illustrious King Arthur,” we read, “that at a certain festival of the Nativity, at Caerleon, that monarch having conferred military distinction upon a valiant youth of the name of Ider, the son of King Nuth, in order to prove him, conducted him to the hill of Brentenol, for the purpose of fighting three most atrocious giants. And Ider, going before the rest of the company, attacked the giants valorously, and slew them. And when Arthur came up he found him apparently dead, having fainted with the immense toil he had undergone, whereupon he reproached himself with having been the cause of his death, through his tardiness in coming to his aid; and *arriving at Glastonbury*, he appointed there four-and-twenty monks to say mass for his soul, and endowed them most amply with lands, and with gold and silver, chalices, and other ecclesiastical ornaments.” From this we might well infer that King Arthur was in the habit of paying periodical visits to the island-valley. “The great Lady Lyle of Avelon,” girt with a sword which only Balin could draw from its scabbard, with results afterwards disastrous to himself, is a link in the associations of Arthur and his court with the island-valley.

His war with King Melvas, of Somersetshire

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(strongly reminiscent of the last war with Mordred, as related by Malory), reads like veritable history. While engaged in subduing the savage hordes in Wales and Cornwall, and in beating back the advancing Saxons, he found that the "Rex Rebellus" Melvas had stolen away his wife Guinevere, and carried her to Ynyswytryn. King Arthur gathered a large force, and set out with his knights to take summary vengeance on the ravisher, whom he forthwith besieged. A well-known antiquary has found reason to believe that Arthur's force was "a numberless multitude;" but at all events there is little doubt that Melvas, who was only an "underlord," would have been heavily defeated had a battle ensued. But conflict was avoided by the intervention of Gildas, the Abbot, who commanded Melvas to restore Guinevere to her rightful lord, and then succeeded in reconciling the two foes. They both ended by swearing friendship and fidelity to the Abbot, and the facts go far to show the potentiality of that dignitary at this period. Thus, by establishing King Arthur's connection with Glastonbury, we increase the likelihood of his choosing the holy place at Avalon for his last resting-place. He knew the shrine well and had visited the fruitful, balmy island-valley in which his

ancestor's name was deeply revered; and when his time drew nigh he could think of no sweeter, better spot in which to seek for peace. "Comfort thy selfe," said the king to weeping Sir Bedivere after the last battle, "and do as well as thou maiest, for in mee is no trust for to trust in; for I wil into the vale of Avilion for to heale me of my grievous wound; and if thou never heere more of me, pray for my soule." And with the three mourning queens he passed from the bloody field of Camlan up the waters of the Bristol Channel to the isle

"Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly."

"King Arthur, being wounded in battle, was brought to Glastonbury to be healed of his wounds by the healing waters of that place," an old record runs. But his wound was too grievous; and though Merlin prophesied that he "cannot die," the current tradition is that when he reached the sacred isle he "came unto his end." In the time of the first Plantagenet, when the fame of King Arthur was revived, search was made at Glastonbury for the bones of the great British chief. Henry II. was then on his way to Ireland, and Henry of Bloys, then Abbot of Glastonbury, undertook the task, fully intending, no doubt,

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that it should be successful. Between two pillars at a depth of nine feet a stone was found with a leaden cross inscribed on its under side in Latin, "Here lies buried the renowned King Arthur, in the isle of Avalon"; and seven feet lower down his body was found in an oaken coffin. The historian Selden gives us an instructive report of how King Henry was induced to set about the strange enterprise of discovering the remains of King Arthur. He tells us that the king in his expedition towards Ireland was "entertained by the way in Wales with bardish songs, wherein he heard it affirmed that in Glastonbury (made almost an isle by the river's embracements) Arthur was buried betwixt two pillars. He therefore gave commandment to Henri of Blois, then Abbot, to make search for the corps, which was found in a wooden coffin (Girald saith oaken, Leland thinks alder), some sixteen foot deep; but after they had digged nine foot they found a stone on whose lower side was fixt a leaden cross (crosses fixt upon the tombs of old Christians were in all places ordinary) with his name inscribed, and the letter side of it turned to the stone. He (King Arthur) was then honoured with a sumptuous monument, and afterwards the skulls of him and his wife Guinevere were taken out (to remain as separate

relics and spectacles) by Edward Longshanks and Eleanor." But notwithstanding the useful and apposite inscription on the leaden cross, "Hic jacet sepultus inclytus rex Arthurus in insula Avalonia"; or as it is otherwise more epigrammatically given, "Hic jacet Arthurus, Rex quondam, Rexque futurus"—

"His Epitaph recordeth so certaine

Here lieth King Arthur that shall raigne againe ;"—

it is hardly necessary to add that there is almost every reason to believe that this extraordinary "find" could have been nothing but a pious fraud, *in majorem monasterii gloriam*. If the truth be not established, however, it has been incorporated into many chronicles as genuine history. Bale, in his *Actes of English Votaries*, bears testimony in these words: "In Avallon, annus 1191, there found they the fleshe bothe of Arthur and of hys wyfe Guenever turned all into duste, wythin theyr coffins of strong oke, the bones only remaynege. A monke of the same Abbeye, standing and beholding the fine broydinges of the womman's heare as yellow as golde there still to remayne: as a man ravyshe, or more than halfe from hys wyttes, he leaped into the graffe, XV fete depe, to have caughte them sodenlye. But he fayled of hys purpose. For so soon as they were touched

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they fell all to powder." The reference to the depth of the grave reminds us that Stow, in his *Chronicle*, declares that King Arthur was buried sixteen feet underground to prevent the Saxons offering any indignity to his corpse, "which Almighty God, for the sins of the Britons, afterwards permitted," he disappointingly concludes.

Camden's account of the discovery is in these words : "When Henry II, King of England, had learned from the songs of the British bards, that Arthur, the most noble hero of the Britons, whose courage had so often shattered the Saxons, was buried at Glessenbury between two pyramids, he order'd search to be made for the body; and they had scarce digg'd seven feet deep, but they light upon a cross'd stone (cippus) or a stone in the back part whereof was fastened a rude leaden cross, something broad. This being pulled out, appeared to have an inscription upon it, and under it, almost nine foot deep, deposited the bones of the famous Arthur. The letters have a sort of barbarous and Gothic appearance, and are a plain evidence of the barbarity of the age, which was involved in a fatal sort of mist, that no one was found to celebrate the name of King Arthur." The most detailed account of all is given in Joseph Ritson's scholarly work on King Arthur, and the

famous antiquary's outspoken comments on the records "and other legendary rhodomontades" of the monks of Glastonbury can be read with amusement as well as with profit. It is a sufficiently remarkable fact that none of the chroniclers agree in their details, and Matthew Paris distinctly declares that the letters inscribed upon the tomb could "in no wise be read on account of too much barbarism and deformity." Antiquary Leland was sceptical as to the coffin, and William of Malmesbury (1143) said "The sepulchre of Arthur was never seen"; but, despite all contradictions and doubts, the discovery seems to have been generally accepted as genuine, while for many reasons it was gratifying to the people of that and subsequent ages. Caxton would have regarded it as "most execrable infidelity" to have had a doubt upon the subject. At Glastonbury we indubitably seem to get nearer the real Arthur than we are able to do in any of the other localities mentioned by Geoffrey and the later chroniclers. Whether he was the monarch described in the romances or a semi-barbarous chieftain leading the Britons to a final, though only temporary, victory against the Saxons, there remains the same likelihood of his connection with the first Abbey raised in the land.

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On the authority of Gildas, we learn that when the Abbot brought about peace between Arthur and Melvas, both kings made oath never to violate the holy place, and both kings gave the Abbot much territory in token of their gratitude. If, however, it is hard to reconcile the death of King Arthur with Merlin's prophecy, it is harder still to account for the discovery of his bones and his grave in face of the ancient triad which declared his grave to be unknown, and remembering which Tennyson related—

“ His grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth ;”

while the older poet tells how he “raygnes in faerie.” There was, however, a substantial reason for the finding of King Arthur's tomb by Henry of Blois, for at that time the revenues brought by pilgrims to the shrine were not sufficient to provide funds for the building. The contest between Wells and Glastonbury had also begun, and the discovery of the bones of a saint was one of the surest methods of obtaining an advantage. According to Stow's *Chronicle*, the body was found “not enclosed within a tomb of stone, but within a great tree made hollow like a trough, the which being digged upon and opened, therein were found the bones of Arthur, which

were of a marvellous bigness." This circumstantial evidence seems almost irresistible, and no doubt there was a conscientious belief in the discovery at the time it was reported to have been made. Stow has further details to give on the authority of Giraldus Cambriensis, "a learned man that then lived, who reporteth to have heard of the Abbot of Glastonbury that the shin-bone of Arthur being set up by the leg of a very tall man, came above his knee by three fingers. The skull of his head was of a wonderful bigness; in which head there appeared the points of ten wounds, or more, all which were grown in one seam, except only that whereof he died, which being greater than the other, appeared very plain." Such, then, are the records of this wondrous discovery.

Modern Glastonbury has its museum in which may be seen some pottery from "King Arthur's Palace at Wedmore," and a thirteenth or fourteenth century representation on the side of a mirror case of Queen Guinevere deserting with Sir Lancelot, the only two relics, I believe, which in any way recall the connection of King Arthur with the place. There are evidences of the antiquity of the Abbey in abundance; though pilgrims' staffs, leather bottles, palls, grace cups,

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roods, "counters" made by the monks to serve as coin, and even the reliquary containing a small piece of bone supposed to be of St. Paulinus, sent or left by St. Augustine himself for the purpose of establishing the modified form of the Benedictine rule, do not quite take us back to the sixth century. Though the actual date of King Arthur's death is not known, and though his age is variously given from just over fifty to passing ninety, and though there is no consensus of opinion as to the length of his reign, we never hear of him at a later date than 604; and unfortunately all the Glastonbury relics take us back at most to the tenth century. Yet enthusiastic Drayton might well be carried away with the theme with which Glastonbury supplied him; and remembering the marvels of its past and the splendour of its aspect in his own day, he asked what place was comparable with the "three times famous isle?"

"To whom didst thou commit that monument to keep,
When not great Arthur's tomb, nor holy Joseph's grave
From sacrilege had power their holy bones to save?"

This is one of the insoluble mysteries. The remains of Arthur and Guinevere are stated to have had noble burial by King Henry's command in "a fair tomb of marble," and the cross of lead bear-



THE ABBEY BARN, GLASTONBURY

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ing the original inscription was placed in the church treasury. At the suppression of the monasteries it is assumed that all the tombs and monuments shared one fate. Edward I and his queen visited Glastonbury in 1278, and after seeing the shrine, fixed their signets upon the separate "chests" in which the dust was deposited. Within the sepulchre they placed a solemn written record of what they had seen, together with the names of the principal witnesses. King Edward is also said to have had Arthur's crowns and jewels rendered to him. He and his queen were satisfied that they had gazed upon "the bones of the most noble Arthur"; and theirs were the last eyes to see the remains, false or true. The historian Speed, in indignant strain, tells of the doom that befell the Abbey in Henry VIII's days, when "this noble monument, among the fatal overthrows of infinite more, was altogether razed by those whose over-hasty actions and too forward zeal in these behalfts hath left us the want of many truths, and cause to wish that some of their employments had been better spent." Whatever sign of King Arthur's tomb, real or pretended, had existed, thus vanished for ever, and the prophesied mystery of his grave became fulfilled.

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All that now remains in association with his name, and his final acts, and his uncomprehended fate, is the Abbey, surpassingly beautiful in ruin, founded in times faded almost from the recollections of a race; it is itself half mystery and half monument. The stateliest of its chambers still bears the name of St. Joseph's Chapel, and itself with its delicate tracery, its exquisitely designed windows, its carved pillars, is like a fairy tale in stone. The little church built with wattles from the marsh became the church triumphant and the church supremely beautiful in after-time. When the second Henry visited it the already venerable Abbey was a pile of architectural wonders and magnificence, thanks to the labours of Abbot Harlewinus. It was he who designed and erected that veritable gem of architecture, gorgeously ornamented and finished in classic grace, which serves as memorial to the first Christian saint in England. "Imagination cannot realise," says one chronicler, "how grand and beautiful must have been the view from St. Joseph's Chapel through its long-drawn fretted aisles up to the high altar with its four corners, symbolising the Gospel to be spread through the four quarters of the world." The matchless temple was over a hundred feet longer than Westminster Abbey;

and its spaciousness was only equalled by its riches. Lofty mullioned windows rose nearly to the vaulting, richly dight and casting a dim religious light; and the profuse decorations of the walls took the form of running patterns of foliage, while vivid paintings of the sun and stars gave colour and animation to the cold stone. Little wonder that the gorgeous Abbey in all its loveliness and noble proportions was deemed a fitting resting-place for kings and saints. Claiming St. Joseph as its founder, it was almost in natural sequence that it should make claim to be the shrine of the last and greatest of the Christian kings, the Arthur whom Geoffrey of Monmouth had made renowned—"the most king and knight of the world, and most loved of the fellowship of noble knights, and by turn they were all upholden." It was to Glastonbury that the "Bishop of Canterbury" fled, and took his goods, and "lived in poverty and in holy prayers" when the war with Mordred broke out. To this hermit came Sir Bedivere, and found him by a tomb new-graven. "Sir," said Sir Bedivere, "what man is there interred that ye pray so fast for?" "Fair son," said the hermit, "I wot not verily, but by deeming. But this night, at midnight, here came a number of ladies, and brought hither

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a dead corpse, and prayed me to bury him; and here they offered an hundred tapers, and gave me an hundred besants." "Alas," said Sir Bedivere, "that was my lord King Arthur, that here lieth buried in this chapel!" Then Sir Bedivere swooned, and when he awoke prayed that he might abide there henceforth and live with fasting and prayers. "Far from hence will I never go," said he, "by my will, but all the days of my life to pray for my lord Arthur."

Glastonbury to-day, amid all its ruin, spoliation and change, hints everywhere of the glory of its past. The charm of it lingers though the excellence of it has vanished. In its stillness and seclusion it retains an old-world air of beauty and of simplicity; time which has overthrown so much has tainted nought. Tower, wall, and roof mingle their grey and brown and red in the peaceful valley which the sparkling rivulets water and entwine as with silver threads. The sheltered gardens upon which the sunlight falls luxurious are bounteous as ever they were, and one might almost expect to see in the shadowy consecrated places cowed and hooded monks pacing noiselessly, their eyes intent upon black-letter missals, or uplifted to behold the magic and splendour of hill and dale. The winding road has felt the pres-

sure of many pilgrims' feet; at the vesper hour the weary fervent throng gathered about the Abbey doors; and through the spacious aisles, cool and shadowy, or stained with the rich colours carried by slanting beams through the painted windows, the holy brothers moved in slow and solemn procession, their voices subdued in chant, the air they breathed sweet with incense. Easily imagined is the hallowed aspect of the lofty fane when the last rays of the sun shot redly within, suffused the altar in a crimson haze, and glowed upon the burnished ornaments and the carvings of veined marble and whitest stone; when the darkness gathered hauntingly, and one by one the tapers were lit, while the people were hushed and expectant, and the monks bowed themselves in adoration. Holy relics would show dimly in their places, rod and crucifix stand out dark against the walls, the royal tombs be covered as with a pall, and a mysterious awe descend upon the worshippers in the temple. Outside the world would be hushed, even as it is hushed to-day when the pilgrim stands amid the broken walls of St. Joseph's Chapel, or treads the thick green turf between crumbling vestibule and arch. Truly Glastonbury was an isle of rest.

King Arthur had fought against the pagan

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horde and "upheld the Christ." Glastonbury withstood the heathen, and boasted to the last of never having fallen into sacrilegious hands. It was Christian always—the Church of martyrs like Indractus, of saints like Cuthbert, Patrick, David, and Dunstan, and of kings like Ina, Edmund, and Arthur. The massive walls nobly withstood the assault of time, and the ruins of to-day are the work of the iconoclast, due to desecration and not decay. The remnants are pathetic in their significance; the scene of mutilated beauty is mournful beyond expression. Yet the beauty remains, though it is not the beauty of spirituality and life, but of the ethereality of death. As we gaze we are with a bygone age and generation, and that age seems to imbue our thought and tinge our reflections. Everywhere may be seen mementoes; all sounds are like echoes, faint and far; all sights are dim with haze. Glastonbury is for retrospection. The air is full of traditions; its history deals with phantoms and its opening page is of myths.

Take your stand on Wearyall Hill, and brood awhile upon the surroundings. You thrill to think that here St. Joseph might have paused; that here, where lies a stone engraved with J. A., his withered pilgrim's staff might have burst into



RUINS OF ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL, GLASTONBURY

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bloom. A few young trees are bending to the wind; down below the old city stretches away in grey lines, and there are some tumble-down houses of antique appearance produced by the old rafters and rough stone of which they are constructed. Bright and cheerful are many lattice windows which twinkle out between the heavy time-scarred mullions wrought long and long ago. Yonder is Tor Hill, and the great green valley spreads southward, strewn with trees thickly, and ending only where the dipping horizon meets it. The two Glastonbury towers are standing out boldly, almost as if defiant; the red roofs of the city cluster below; and, set deeply and immutably among aged and dark green trees, are the rent but erect walls of the first Christian Abbey.

Or retrace your steps, and after passing the Abbey bounds, mount the steep Tor and stand by the Tower which alone escaped the shattering force of earthquake. From this summit the view of the landscape is far and good. Scarcely can you realise that once the salt waves lapped this steep eminence, but the sand and shells mixed and embedded in the soil have graven that event more legibly than the pen of man could have inscribed it. It is sunset—sunset over the Avalonian isle. The day has been calm and grey, and

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the end is to be calm, autumnal, subdued. There is one long quivering stretch of cardinal in the west, but elsewhere the sky is wonderfully sombre, yet exquisitely soft and pearly clear. The furthest limit of the vale fast becomes invisible, fading imperceptibly, apparently merging into the sky as it becomes a pure deep blue. Here and there a purple peak of the range of hills running seaward rises sharply and pierces the thin gauzy clouds which the wind brings up. The white road gleams below, wholly deserted, yet fancy may conjure up spectres gliding at nightfall along the once hallowed way to the shrine. On this steep hill, alone, cloud-high, you feel that the silence is mystical, and wonder if the sleeping city with its ghosts and traditions is like the fabled cities of enchanters which rise at night without foundation and dissolve like mist in the earliest light of morning.

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